

RAWLINS PARK (Reservation No. 13)
New York Avenue and E Street,
between 18th and 19th streets, NW
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS NO. DC-688

HABS
DC
WASH
630-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

RAWLINS PARK
(Reservation Number 13)

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Location: New York Avenue and E streets, between 18th and 19th streets, NW.

Owner/Manager: U.S. government, National Park Service.

Present Use: Sitting park, monument site.

Significance: Designated as an open space on Ellicott's plan of the city, this reservation has been used continuously as a park since it was first improved in 1873. The statue of Gen. John Rawlins is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of a multi-property listing of Civil War Statuary in the District of Columbia.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of plan: 1792, Ellicott Plan.
2. Original and subsequent owners: This space was largely encompassed within a tract of land called the Vineyard patented in 1696 by William Hutchison. At the time of its transfer to the federal government in 1791, the west portion was included in a town called Hamburgh, platted by Jacob Funk but never developed. The east portion of the reservation was within the landholdings of David Burnes.
3. First Improvement: 1873.
4. Alterations and additions:

1874:	Gen. John A. Rawlins statue erected.
1886:	Rawlins Statue removed to Tenth and D streets, NW.
1917:	Park redesigned with paths on lines of travel.
1931:	Rawlins statue reerected.
1937-38:	Park redesigned with terrace plan.

B. Historical Context:

The open rectangle that would come to be known as Rawlins Park did not appear on Pierre L'Enfant's 1791 plan of the city. On Andrew Ellicott's 1792 plan, however, E Street changes latitude upon intersecting with New York Avenue

between 18th and 19th streets, forming a rectangular open space.¹

At the time the city was planned, the west side of this reservation overlapped the east boundary of a paper town called Hamburg, platted in 1772, and the east side was within a tract of land owned by David Burnes. One block to the south ran a small tributary of the Goose (or Tiber) Creek known as the Duck Creek, and the vicinity of the square offered magnificent views of the Potomac River.²

Perhaps it was for this view, coupled with the proximity to the President's House, that John Tayloe built his elegant Octagon House, at the northwest corner of the square in 1799. Although the Octagon soon became a popular social gathering place, the surrounding neighborhood failed to develop, and after the death of Tayloe's widow in the 1850s, "the immediate neighborhood seemed to have lost its attraction as a place of residence."³ No records have been found to suggest that the rectangular open space upon which the home faced was ever formally landscaped as a park.

Although the squares surrounding the reservation were still largely undeveloped in the 1870s, the park and surrounding streets were improved along with those throughout the northwest quadrant during a three-year whirlwind of public works projects of the short-lived territorial government in power from 1871-74. During this time, the Board of Public Works, under the leadership of Alexander "Boss" Shepherd, paved miles of streets, laid gas lines and sewers and planted thousands of trees. During a congressional inquiry into alleged corruption, a map was produced by the Board of Public Works that indicates that the roadway surrounding Rawlins Park was in the process of being paved with concrete in 1872.

As the Board of Public Works oversaw improvements to the streets, the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds (OPB&G) under the control of the Army Corps of Engineers worked to improve the nearby federal reservations. Shepherd's good friend, Orville E. Babcock was in charge of the OPB&G, and this square was among many that were improved during his tenure. On June 10, 1872, Congress appropriated \$10,000 to erect a statue of Gen. John A. Rawlins, and in 1873 initial improvements were made to the park in preparation for the statue. In the annual report of 1873, Babcock referred to the reservation for the first time as Rawlins Park and described it as follows:

This reservation was very much below grade and required heavy filling; soil for which was obtained from the White Lot, (today's Ellipse) from the excavation made for the new State War and Navy departments and from a reservation on Massachusetts Avenue between Eleventh and Twelfth streets which was above grade. . . A few trees, evergreens etc. have been planted in this reservation and are doing well. Two small fountains have been constructed with an ornamental margin and center-piece of rock-work

¹ Mirror images of this configuration occur four blocks north of Rawlins Square where H Street diverts at Pennsylvania Avenue and several blocks east at 14th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue where E Street returns to the latitude it had west of Rawlins Square.

² McNeil, 42.

³ Eberlein and Hubbard, 315.

around, and in which plants have been planted.⁴

The OPB&G continued to make annual improvements to the park, enclosing it in 1874 with an iron post-and-chain fence, similar to those erected throughout the city to protect the new parks from the ravages of wandering animals. As part of Shepherd's program of improvements, gas lines were laid throughout the city for street lamps, and likewise, lamp posts were placed in Rawlins and several other improved reservations. Because the park was located on sloping ground, a terrace was built along the north side to prevent the soil from the higher ground from washing down. A variety of trees were planted in the square, including six junipers, eight Virginia cedars, four dogwoods, one sassafras, one black walnut, three English maples, three spireas, one magnolia, four forsythias, one birch, one Japan quince, and one jasmine.

In 1875, the Westham Granite Company of Richmond, Virginia, was awarded the contract to construct a base for the Rawlins statue, and by November it was complete. The statue, sculpted by Joseph A. Bailey, was placed on top, completing the highly improved park. The 8'-tall bronze likeness of the Civil War general was cast from a cannon he captured from the Confederate Army.

Despite the improvement of the park and the rapid development of the city's northwest quadrant throughout the 1870s, the area around the park remained largely unoccupied. When veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic visited the site in 1886 they saw their honored general's likeness in an unkempt park in a sparsely populated area. In compliance with their request, the statue was removed and relocated in Reservation No. 35 near the bustling Center Market on Pennsylvania Avenue.⁵ The urns that flanked the statue were also moved to other reservations. Nevertheless, the square continued to be called Rawlins Park, and the OPB&G continued its routine maintenance, such as the replacement of the old-style gas lamps with Boulevard lamps in 1904.

The vicinity of the park began to change in the last decade of the nineteenth century as the Army Corps of Engineers began filling in the marshes west of the Monument Grounds four blocks to the south, eliminating the "pestilent flats" that may have contributed to the area's slow growth.

In 1915, construction was begun on the Department of Interior Building in the square north of the park, and in anticipation of the completion of the building, the OPB&G requested \$3,000 to update the park's design. Ideas about park design had changed since the 1900s and as a result, many parks were being redesigned throughout the city. The new plan for Rawlins Park, begun in October 1916, exemplified many of these new ideas. The McMillan Report of 1901 had criticized the uniform and systematic treatment of the parks with elements such as post-and-chain fences around their perimeters. The improvements proposed for Rawlins Park included removing the fence and installing simple concrete coping in its place. Because the park was located in an area slated for an office building, it would receive different landscape treatment than a park in a residential area. The philosophy behind this distinction was described in 1918 as follows:

Forty or fifty years ago, when many of the small parks in Washington were

⁴ Annual Report . . ., 1873, 5.

⁵ Goode, 466-67.

first laid out, there did not exist the rush of business of today, and the dignified, slow-going gentleman of those times did not mind following the curvilinear walks about numerous flower beds, or describing large semicircles around fountains and statues . . . Throughout the central portion of the city today, the businessman feels that he must get from place to place as quickly as possible, and he will usually dodge such a park rather than wind around the long paths or run the chance of being shunted off in the wrong direction.⁶

Accordingly, the park's two new concrete paths criss-crossed straight through the center of the park from each corner. OPB&G Landscape Architect George Burnap probably designed or oversaw the new park plan in 1916. His views on park design were made very clear in a book he wrote on landscape design in 1918. While he advocated paths designed for convenience, he also introduced new ideas about commemorative memorial structures in parks. He wrote, "In America, we have the horrid habit of placing an equestrian statue to some war hero or another in the exact center of every park . . . a park is a park and should not be made into a setting for a statue."⁷ He recommended the erection of commemorative fountains or planting in parks rather than a "petrified general." In keeping with this philosophy, the new design featured a central marble fountain erected by the American Society of Civil Engineers in honor of Alfred Noble, "a civil engineer of distinguished ability in connection with government work."⁸ A full-sized model of the fountain in plaster was placed in the center of the park until the original was complete. Two additional parallel paths from the north perimeter sidewalk led south to the central fountain, and fourteen lamps were installed in the park's interior. The new design was in place by the time the Department of Interior Building was completed in 1917.

In 1931 when the Center Market was demolished to make way for the National Archives, the Gen. Rawlins statue was returned to the park named after him. Because a fountain had been erected in the center of the park, the statue was placed on the east side and a semicircular path was laid to provide pedestrian access to it from the north and south perimeter walks.

Soon after the statue was returned, the park was torn up and entirely redesigned again. By the 1930s, the Department of Interior had outgrown its building on the north side of the park and sought a site for a larger building. The new one was to be built in the area between G and 18th streets, Constitution Avenue, and the Potomac River--slated for redevelopment as the "Federal Rectangle." The site south of Rawlins Park was finally chosen because D Street, one block south of the park, supported little traffic and could be closed to accommodate the massive building that now encompasses two city squares. A corridor was tunnelled under the park to connect the new Department of Interior building to the old one on the north side of the park.

The erection of the new building prompted yet another redesign of Rawlins Park in 1935-36. Predicting an increase of traffic volume in the vicinity of the

⁶ Small, 24.

⁷ Burnap, 1916.

⁸ Annual Report . . ., 1917, \$703.

new federal buildings planned for the area, the roadways on the north and south sides of the park--both known as E Street--were widened; the park was reduced in size by 24' on the north side 12-1/3' on the south, 14' on the east and 9' on the west. The trees planted around the park perimeter were removed because they stood in the way of the widened roadways.

The symmetrical and formal plan that was installed remains largely in place today. Because the land is sloped, landscape architects Donald Klein and Leland Bartlett terraced the park in three levels. The intermediate level is a large flagstone terrace with a central fountain flanked by reflecting pools.

Since the 1930s, the buildings north and south of the park have remained the same, as has the park design, but the move toward limited-access expressways in the 1960s made changes in the area directly west of the park. As the business district expanded, the traffic congestion and parking shortages necessitated new roads. To ease traffic in the area, E Street west of Rawlins Park was converted into a sunken expressway. The Washington Auditorium Building that faced the park from the west since the early 1920s was demolished, and in 1965 New York Avenue south of Rawlins Park was eliminated altogether. The sunken E Street expressway begins one block west of Rawlins Park and the site of the Auditorium Building is now an open space called Walt Whitman Park, Reservation No. 715. While Rawlins Park is an ornamental sitting park where employees from nearby buildings gather for lunch, Whitman Park is used for recreation. The east third of it contains a playground enclosed by a fence where children from nearby day-care centers are brought to play. The remaining two-thirds is an open field often used for pick-up games of soccer or football.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. Overall dimensions: This rectangular park measures approximately 150' x 450' and covers about 1.5 acres.
- B. Materials:
 1. Pathways, paving: The park is surrounded by concrete-paver perimeter sidewalks. A large flagstone terrace runs almost the length of the park. Flanked on the north and south by straight flag paths running from east to west. A wide stairway leads down to the terrace from the west side and two stairways lead up to it from the east end and center of the southern path, and down to it from the same places on the northern path.
 2. Vegetation:
 - a. Grass: Panels between the interior paths and the patio are sodded.
 - b. Trees, shrubs, hedges: Dense shrub massing fills the panels between the perimeter sidewalk and interior paths. Evenly spaced sycamore trees are planted in the shrub panels between the perimeter and interior walks and Saucer Magnolias are planted in the sodded panels between the interior paths and central patio.
 - c. Flowers, seasonal plantings: The rectangular reflecting pools contain special submerged planters for aquatic plants.

3. Structures:

- a. Fences, retaining walls: Randomly coursed flagstone retaining walls flank the stairways between the terraces. The entire park is surrounded by ornamental-iron fencing.
- b. Benches: Metal-frame, wood-slat benches face onto the interior paths and central terrace.
- c. Statues: The portrait statue of Maj. Gen. John A. Rawlins was designed by sculptor Joseph A. Bailey and erected in the park in 1874. The 8'-tall bronze statue of the Civil War hero was cast from a cannon he captured from the Confederate Army and faces into the park from the east side of the central terrace.
- d. Fountains: In the center of the central terrace is a square pool with cropped corners flanked by two long rectangular reflecting pools.
- e. Lighting: Washington Globe lamps illuminate the perimeter sidewalks while the interior of the park is illuminated by Saratoga lamps placed in the grass panels.

C. Site:

1. Character of surrounding structures: The park is surrounded by large office buildings. The entire block to the south is occupied by the Department of Interior building, and the General Services Administration building encompasses the entire block north of the park.
2. Traffic patterns: All roadways around the park have four-lanes of one-way traffic traveling counter-clockwise.
3. Vistas: The Old Executive Office Building is visible from the north side of the park. It also blocks the vista to the White House.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Maps:

Boschke, A. "Topographical Map of the District of Columbia surveyed in the years '57, '58, and '59."

District of Columbia Board of Public Works. "Exhibit Chart of Improved Street and Avenues." 1872.

Ellicott, Andrew. "Plan of the City of Washington." 1792.

L'Enfant, Pierre Charles. "Plan of the City of Washington." 1791.

Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. "Plan of the City of Washington, District of Columbia, showing the Public Reservations." Prepared by Orville E.

Babcock. 1871.

Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. "Map of the City of Washington showing the Public Reservations Under Control of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds." 1884, 1887, and 1894.

B. Park plans: See Supplemental Information below for a list of attached plans. Additional plans are located at the Office of Land Use, National Capital Region.

C. Early Views:

1927: Photograph from survey of reservations, located in the files Office of Land Use, National Capital Region, National Park Service.

1940: View of park four years after redesign (Look and Perrault, 24).

D. Bibliography:

Annual Reports of the Office of Public Buildings and Grounds. Annual Reports of the Chief of Engineers. 1867-1933.

Burnap, George. Parks, Their Design, Equipment and Use. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1916.

Eberlein, Harold Donaldson, and Cortlandt Van Dyke Hubbard. Historic Houses of Georgetown and Washington City. Richmond: Dietz Press, 1958.

Goode, James. Outdoor Sculpture of Washington. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Look, David W. and Carole Perrault. The Interior Building: Its Architecture and Art. National Park Service, Preservation Assistance Division, 1986.

McNeil, Priscilla W. "Rock Creek Hundred: Land Conveyed for the Federal City." Washington History 3 (Spring/Summer, 1991): 34-51.

Record Group 42, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA RG42).

Reservation files. National Capital Region Headquarters, Land Use Office.

Small, John H. Jr. "Some Small Parks in Washington, D.C.: Evolution in Path Systems" Landscape Architecture, October 1918.

"Terracing of Rawlins Park is Completed," The Evening Star Washington, D.C. Nov. 2, 1937.

Prepared by: Elizabeth Barthold
Project Historian
National Park Service
1993

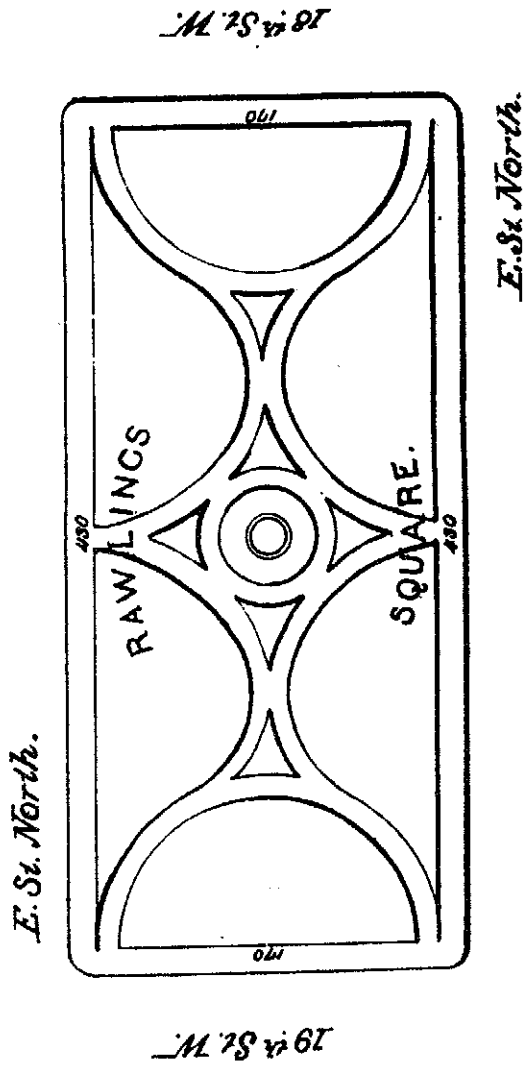
PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION:

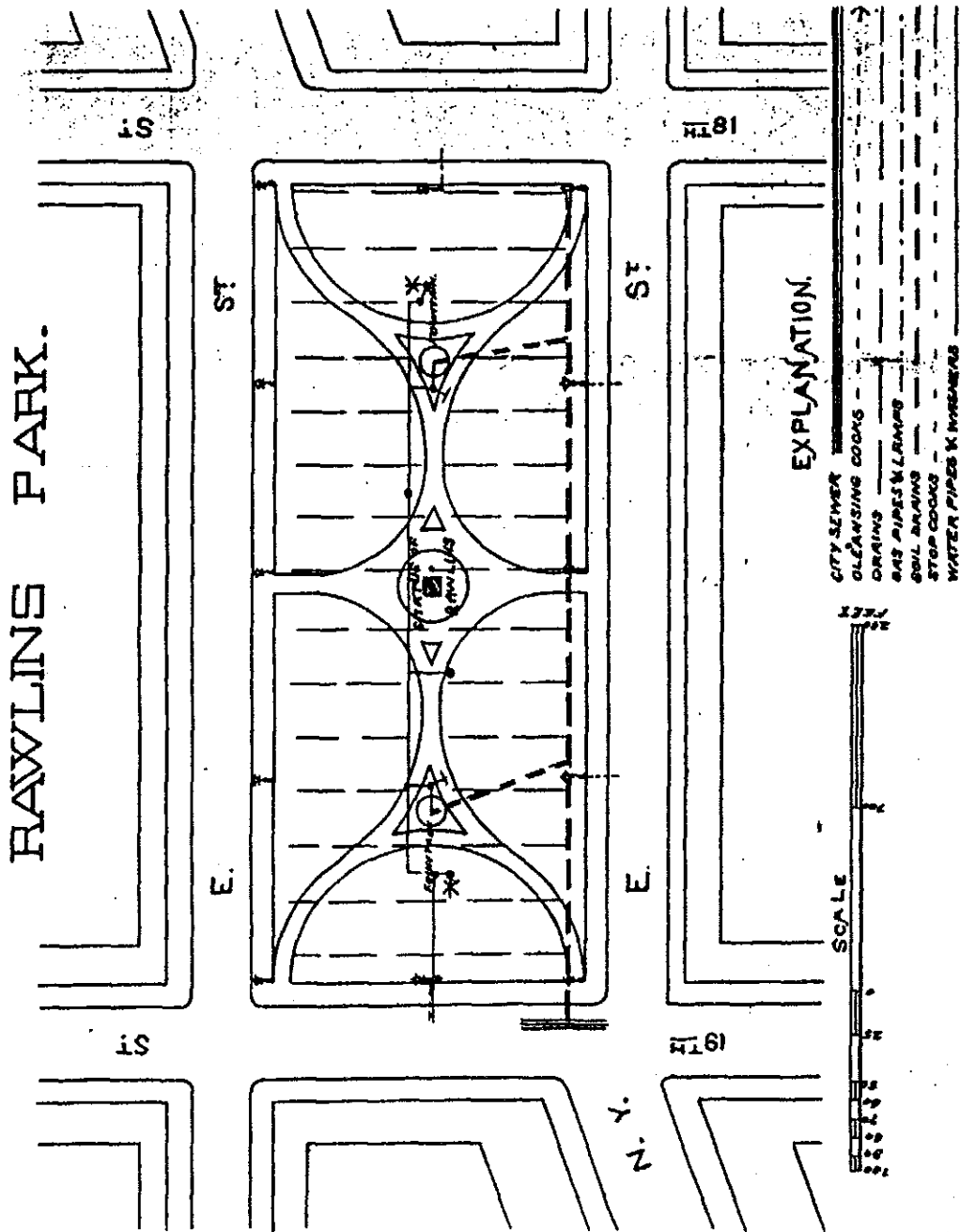
The Plan of Washington, D.C., project was carried out from 1990-93 by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) Division, Robert J. Kapsch, chief. The project sponsors were the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation Inc. of Washington, D.C.; the Historic Preservation Division, District of Columbia Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, which provided Historic Preservation Fund monies; the National Capital Region and its White House Liaison office, NPS; and the National Park Foundation Inc.

HABS historian Sara Amy Leach was the project leader and Elizabeth J. Barthold was project historian. Architectural delineators were: Robert Arzola, HABS; Julianne Jorgensen, University of Maryland; Robert Juskevich, Catholic University of America; Sandra M. E. Leiva, US/ICOMOS-Argentina; and Tomasz Zweich, US/ICOMOS-Poland, Board of Historical Gardens and Palace Conservation. Katherine Grandine served as a data collector. The photographs are by John McWilliams, Atlanta, except for the aerial views, which are by Jack E. Boucher, HABS, courtesy of the U.S. Park Police - Aviation Division.

PART V. SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

- Page 9 1876: Diagram showing dimensions of "Rawlings (sic) Park," included "Government Reservations within the City Boundaries," City Lots, Real Estate Atlas (NARA RG42 230).
- Page 10 1885: Park plan showing path layout and locations of water and gas pipes, drains and lamps (Annual Report . . . , 1886).
- Page 11 1929: Park plan shows dimensions, path layout, and locations of statue and fountain.
- Page 12 1936: General and layout plan showing redevelopment (one of nine sheets).





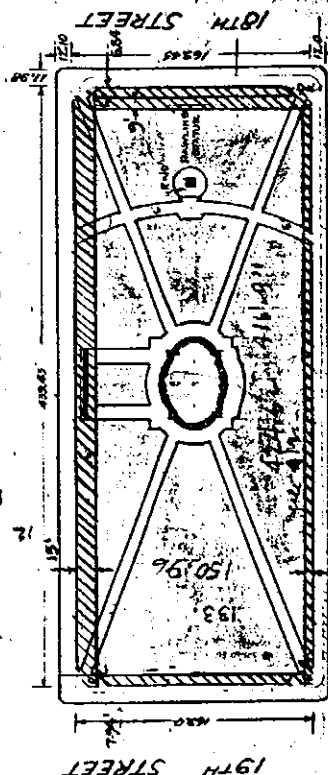
H EX1 p12 v2 49-2

To accompany Annual Report of Office
in charge of Public Buildings and Grounds
for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1886.

TOTAL AREA OF VARIOUS FEATURES		17,530.06 SQ FT	
KIND	NO.	SQ. FT.	
BRIDGES			
HIGHWAY			
FOOT			
CULVERTS			
WALKS AROUND RESERVATION			
KIND	LIN. FT.	WIDTH	SQ. FT.
Concrete	1265.96	11.0'	13,951.13
WATERWAYS			
LIN. FT.	WIDTH	SQ. FT.	
RETAINING WALL			
LIN. FT.	WIDTH	SQ. FT.	
COPING			
LIN. FT.	WIDTH	SQ. FT.	
Stone			
Concrete	1096.10	1.25	1370.10
CURB			
LIN. FT.	WIDTH	SQ. FT.	
Stone			
Concrete			
WALKERS			
LIN. FT.	WIDTH	SQ. FT.	
Stone			
Brick			
Concrete			
SPORTS			
Tennis Courts			
Rogue Courts			
Baseball Fields			
Hockey Fields			
Soccer Fields			
Cricket Fields			
Riding Grounds			
Band Stands			
Bathing Beaches			
Childrens Playgrnds			
Athletic Fields			
Volleyball Courts			
Croquet Courts			
Football Fields			
Polo Fields			
Lacrosse Fields			
Picnic Grounds			
Golf Courses			
Bowling Greens			
Quartz Courts			
Sand Boxes			
STATUES			
RAWLINS STATUE			
TREES			
(Kind)			
Various			
No. 53			
(See Map File No. 54-20)			
Trees on Sidewalks around Res.			
27			
RES. AREA (SQ. FT.) (ACRES)			
74,698.9'			
1.71'			
LOCATION: E Street bet. 18th & 19th Sts. N.W.			

Field Work By: L.M.K. 1923

Changed

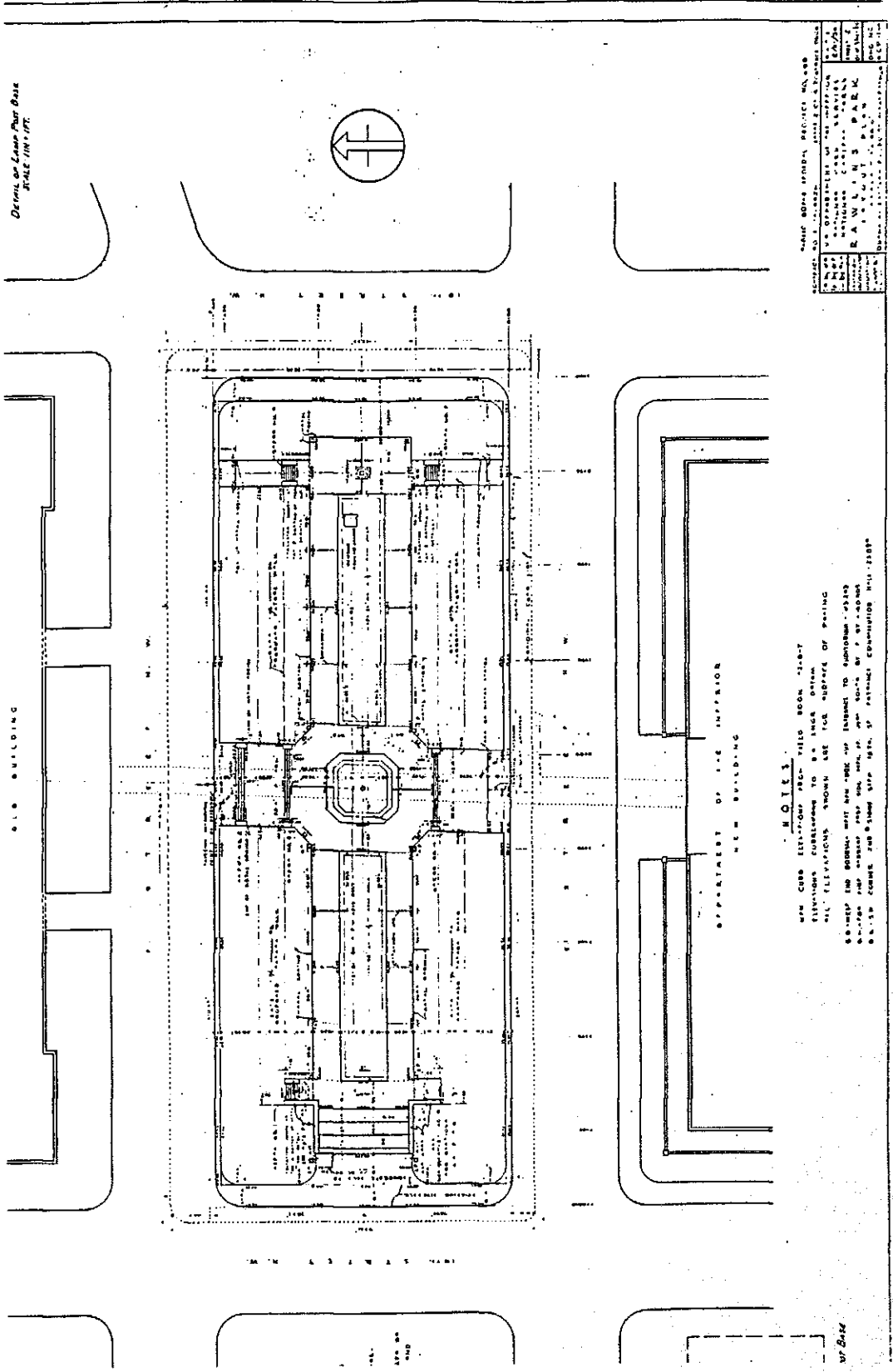


AREA TRANS. TO D.C. COMPRES. - 10556. 44' 41" Nov. 10, 1936
 AREA TRANS. TO D.C. COMPRES. - 1958 64. JAN. 10, 1937
 8650' AREA
 10' 0"

NO.	SQ. FT.	SQ. YDS.	BUILDINGS	NO. SQ. FT. COVERED
24			Toilet	
	Shrub Beds			
	Flower Beds	1250.0		
	Lawn	57,167.74		
	Forest Area			
	Unimproved A.			
HEDGE (Kind)				
LENGTH X WIDTH X HEIGHT SQ. FT.				
STATUES: Names				
RAWLINS STATUE				
TREES (Kind)				
Various				
No. 53				
(See Map File No. 54-20)				
Trees on Sidewalks around Res.				
27				
RES. AREA (SQ. FT.) (ACRES)				
74,698.9'				
1.71'				
LOCATION: E Street bet. 18th & 19th Sts. N.W.				

NO. 15
 54-11 (20-0-13)
 Rawlins Park

TRANSF. TO PARK ACQUIRED
 TRANSF. FROM RR.P.P.



Detail of Laminated Base
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

NOTE: THE ABOVE DRAWING IS A GENERAL PLAN OF THE BUILDING AND DOES NOT SHOW THE LOCATION OF THE VARIOUS ROOMS AND OFFICES. FOR THE LOCATION OF THE VARIOUS ROOMS AND OFFICES, REFER TO THE ARCHITECTURAL RECORDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, NEW BUILDING.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NEW BUILDING

DATE	1914
BY	W. B. WOOD
CHECKED BY	W. B. WOOD
APPROVED BY	W. B. WOOD
SCALE	1/4" = 1'-0"
TITLE	DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, NEW BUILDING
PROJECT NO.	1000
REVISIONS	
NO.	DESCRIPTION
1	AS SHOWN

W. B. WOOD