

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Property

\_\_\_\_\_  
County and State

Section number **SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD** Page \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

NRIS Reference Number: 13000305

Property Name: Buffalo Zoo Entrance Court

County: Erie State: New York

Multiple Name:

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*Alexis Abernathy*  
Signature of the Keeper

*6/6/13*  
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

In Section 8 of the National Register of Historic Places nomination area of significance has been changed from landscape architecture to architecture and ethnic heritage should be written as ethnic heritage/black.

While John Brent spent most of his career as a landscape architect, there remains almost no landscape left, two trees, at the Buffalo Zoo to document Brent's contributions. With just an an acre to work with an only a wall left of his work. It is only the Entrance Court left to document Brent's work, an architectural element. Therefore the change to the area of significance architecture.

The National Register guidelines also require, when documenting ethnic heritage, that ethnic heritage needs to be specific.

Alexis Abernathy  
National Register Reviewer  
202-354-2236

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



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This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

#### 1. Name of Property

historic name Buffalo Zoo Entrance Court

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2. Location

street & number Parkside Avenue & Amherst Street [ ] not for publication

city or town Buffalo [ ] vicinity

state New York code NY county Erie code 029 zip code 14214

#### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements as set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [X] locally. ([ ] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Rudolph A. Puzos DSHPO

3/29/13

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([ ] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register  
[ ] see continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register  
[ ] see continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall

Signature of the Keeper

date of action

5-22-13



**Buffalo Zoo Entrance Court**

**Erie County, New York**

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

**A** Property associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

**B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

**D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

**A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

**B** removed from its original location

**C** a birthplace or grave

**D** a cemetery

**E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure

**F** a commemorative property

**G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

**Areas of Significance:**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Landscape Architecture

Ethnic Heritage

**Period of Significance:**

1935 - 1938

**Significant Dates:**

1935, 1938

**Significant Person:**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation:**

N/A

**Architect/Builder:**

John Edmonston Brent

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)



**Buffalo Zoo Entrance Court**  
Name of Property  
city or town San Antonio

**Erie County, New York**  
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state TX zip code 78209

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner** (Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name City of Buffalo (Buffalo Zoo)  
street & number 300 Parkside Avenue telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Buffalo state NY zip code 14214

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, D.C. 20503

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Section 7 Page 1

The Buffalo Zoo Entrance Court is located at the intersection of Parkside Avenue and Amherst Street in the northeast corner of Delaware Park in Buffalo, Erie County. Delaware Park, including the zoo and entrance court, was listed on the National Register as a contributing feature in the Delaware Park-Front Park System, a component of the Olmsted Parks and Parkways Thematic Resources (1982). That nomination documented and listed the extant features from Frederic Law Olmsted's significant citywide parks and parkways system. While successful in that regard, the nomination did not capture all of the diverse historic aspects of each of its components, some of which had extensive histories independent of the system. In researching African American architect John Edmonston Brent, it was discovered Brent had made significant contributions to the redesign of the zoo between 1935 and 1938. Most of the Brent-designed components have been lost, and the Buffalo Zoo Entrance Court is the single Brent component that survives with a high degree of integrity. In addition to Brent's landscape design, the entrance court also includes important local examples of WPA era sculpture. Neither of these significant themes is covered in the original documentation and the features are not enumerated in the thematic nomination. This nomination supports individual listing for the 1935-1938 entrance court as a rare and significant example of the work of John Edmonston Brent. The nomination includes the two approaches to the entrance from Amherst Street and Parkside Avenue, two small landscaped islands between the approaches, the grassy circle, the stone and wrought iron fence behind it, which includes gates 3 and 4, and the identical fence that encloses the south side of the entrance court and extends around the west side of Parkside Avenue, where it incorporates a stone bus shelter. The entire composition encompasses one acre and includes two contributing features, the entrance court itself and the structure including the fence, gates, and shelter.

Brent's 1935 design replaced an earlier (c1924) entrance at this site that was much simpler and less elaborate. His drawings stipulate major changes to the alignment, the creation of the circle (replacing a simple half circle), three circulation features where there had only been one, two islands, two gates, the fencing, addition of the streetcar shelter, and changes to vegetation. The new entrance filled the entire corner between Amherst and Parkside. Brent took a modest access drive and transformed it into a formal composition within the zoo's overall City Beautiful plan.

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The primary circulation feature is the 600-foot-long, paved, curvilinear drive, 32 feet wide, that arcs southwest from Parkside Avenue and circumscribes the circle. A second, straight, drive (Crandall Rd) approaches the circle from Amherst Street, to the north, and a third roadway extends southeast between the two islands, connecting the other two drives. The latter two roadways are each 29 feet wide. The roadways lining the park and the circle are outlined with small rectangular cobblestone curbs of native New York red Medina (Grimsby) sandstone. The two islands are enclosed with thin slabs of Medina sandstone.

In composition and style, the fencing and gates follow a simple pattern with regular geometry and repeating elements. In general, the fence can be described as a low stone wall with concrete coping, broken by evenly spaced piers of similar construction. Between and atop the piers, the fence is composed of narrow wrought-iron vertical pickets. The gate footings and structural core are cast in place concrete. The caps of the piers and flanking walls are precast concrete. The stone veneer is ashlar masonry of native New York Onondaga limestone, which was quarried within two miles of the zoo site. Textural face variation was created by chiseling some of the stone and "tumbling" some pieces and placing them in regular squared courses. The gate and fence are wrought iron. The entire length of the walls, with fence and gates, measures three hundred and fifteen feet.

There are two major sections of fencing: A long section of fence wraps around the southeast corner of Parkside Avenue and the entrance court, incorporating a stone shelter into the fencing along Parkside. The shelter is an open, rectangular stone structure, five bays wide. The Parkside Avenue elevation is defined by tall piers defining openings into the shelter. Brent's sketches show plans for another small portion of identical fencing framing the northeast corner of the entrance court and Parkside Avenue; however, this was never built. Entrance piers on either side of the entrance court roadway were also not built.

The second, and larger, section of fencing encloses the southwest side of the circle, flaring out at each of its edges, and incorporating the two sets of gates. Each gateway occupies a fifteen-foot-wide opening. Each opening includes two decorative wrought-iron gate segments composed of vertical pickets and long scrolled crosspieces (7'-6" W x 8' - 6" H). The iron gates swing by ground mounted pivots and two hinges anchored in

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the adjacent main piers. Each gateway is flanked by a large pier with a tripartite composition (2'-6" W x 5'-0" L x 9'-9" H) flanked by sections of low wall and wrought-iron, and then by piers enclosing sections of full-height stone walls with decorative openings in the stonework. Although Brent's plans called for a wood latticed parapet atop each of these sections of wall, there is no evidence that they were ever installed. Each gatepost originally featured a stylized light fixture, almost Art Deco in style, about 5'-6" above grade; however, these have been removed (the recesses and metal mounting fixtures survive behind the current signs). Also removed were wooden seats installed between the piers around the circle. The front of each gatepost features a low plinth, upon which sits a sculpture. There are four different grouping of animals: a pair of beavers and a pair of badgers at gate 3, and a single baby elephant and a pair of baby bears at gate 4.

## VEGETATION

The planting plan was not elaborate and generally served to retain the grassy park-like landscape informally dotted with trees that was already in place. Brent's plan specified the removal of a number of trees, mostly those that impeded construction of the new features. He also removed an existing bridle path along Parkside Avenue. Several trees were identified to be retained, including an oak and an elm in the circle; both survive. In addition, Brent specified the addition of elm trees spaced evenly along the front of the fence behind the circle. These do not survive. Bushes currently in front of the fence that partially obscure it were added later.

## MATERIALS

### Limestone veneer

The stone veneer is ashlar masonry of native New York Onondaga limestone. Chunks of black flint embedded in the rock contribute to its natural gray color (very light to very dark) and variation of hardness. The inconsistent hardness makes it especially difficult to work ("dress"/trim) with hand tools. These compounds also contribute to the stone's tendency to decompose into small fragments and result in limited structural strength. In the nineteenth century, Onondaga limestone received limited use in buildings. It was used more often for foundation walls in outbuildings, fencing, and landscape paving. City of Buffalo records verify that all, or a major portion, of the gate and wall limestone came from the Manhattan Quarry which was within two miles of the zoo site.

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Medina sandstone

The roadways lining the park and the circle are outlined with small rectangular cobblestone curbs of native New York red Medina (Grimsby) sandstone, while The two islands are enclosed with thin slabs of the sandstone.

Precast concrete

Precast concrete was used for pier and wall caps in the gate and fence. A light sandblast (abrasive blast) finish was used on all sides of the caps. The precast caps are natural concrete color.

Cast Stone (dry-tamped)

Cast stone was used to produce the animal sculptures. A natural light gray color was created by proportioning the amount of cement and aggregate. Cast stone is an almost-dry cement, lime and aggregate mixture which is dry-tamped, or packed with a tool, into a mold to produce a dense stone-like unit. The dry-tamp fabrication method was used to produce an outer surface resembling a stone surface.

Wrought Iron

The gate and fence is created from decorative wrought iron. Rod iron was used for vertical pickets. Bar iron was used for circular and scroll ornament.

Stainless steel

Detail notes for the gate lights specify the frames to be "stainless steel." This material was frequently used in architectural details influenced by the Art Deco style (1920s-1940s). This material is known for its durability and resistance to corrosion.

Tapestry glass

Detail notes for the gate lights specify the lenses to be "tapestry glass." This variation of plate glass was manufactured by the Pittsburgh Plate Glass company from the 1920s through the 1940s. The surface of the glass was finished with various designs or textures to diffuse light while obstructing clear vision through the material. The glass was produced in thicknesses of either 3/16" or 5/16."

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**INTEGRITY**

The Buffalo Zoo Entrance Court retains substantial integrity to the period of significance. Nearly all of the design features specified by Brent were constructed, with only one small section of fencing, entrance posts, and a decorative lattice top remaining incomplete. A comparison with Brent's plans and drawings reveal that the roadways retain their original size, width, alignment and, materials. Original curbs survive. The fence and shelter composition are intact and in their original location. The only known alterations are the removal of the electrical accent lights from the gates, the wood benches from the seat walls, and the loss of the elm trees.

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Summary

The Buffalo Zoo Entrance Court is significant in the areas of landscape architecture and ethnic heritage as an important and extremely rare surviving design by early twentieth century African America landscape architect John Edmonston Brent (1889-1962). Brent, one of a small group of African Americans to work as both a landscape architect and an architect in the 1930s, completed the design for the entrance court in two stages between 1935 and 1938 as part of an overall expansion and redesign of the zoo. The Buffalo Zoo, the third oldest (1875) zoo in America, originated as part of Fredrick Law Olmsted's design for a municipal park system. In Olmsted's plan, the area that is now the zoo was a deer park in the northeast corner of Delaware Park. Spurred on by local donations of animals, the deer park developed rapidly into a zoo between 1875 and 1930, attracting great community interest and precipitating the founding of the Zoological Society of Buffalo in 1931. A basic conceptual outline for the zoo was developed in 1924 by Buffalo city architect Harold L. Beck; however, the details and construction of the plan were not implemented until WPA funds were secured in 1935 after Beck's retirement. The person most responsible for implementing and developing the plan was architect and landscape architect John Edmonston Brent, who, as an employee of the Buffalo Parks Department, worked on design, planning, and implementation of more than sixteen facilities and exhibits at the zoo from 1935 until his retirement in 1957. Brent played a major role in transforming the layout of the zoo from an outline into an elaborately detailed neoclassical garden influenced by the City Beautiful movement. Of Brent's sixteen documented projects, the majority have been demolished or substantially altered. The nominated property, intended to serve as a major entrance to the zoo at the northeast corner, represented Brent's substantial enlargement and elaboration of what had been a simple entrance road in this location. Brent dignified the corner with a fully developed neoclassical composition, including two entrance drives with cobblestone curbs leading to a formal traffic circle and two entrance gates. The composition was framed by a monumental stone-faced and wrought-iron fence; another section of fencing incorporated an open shelter along the edge of Parkside Avenue. The entrance court fencing was constructed of a variety of materials, including cast concrete, cast stone, limestone, sandstone and wrought iron. Although the composition was classical in form and composition, the materials were used to create a eclectic design embodying rusticated, arts and crafts and even Art Deco elements.

John E. Brent is significant as one of the earliest group of recognized African American landscape architects in

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the United States with a substantial body of work. Brent was one of fewer than one hundred licensed African American architects in the United States at the time. He was also one of the first, and fewer than six, African Americans to be formally recognized and simultaneously practice as both an architect and a landscape architect in America.<sup>1</sup> His 1926 design for Buffalo's Michigan Street YMCA (demolished) was the second "Colored Y" designed by an African American architect in the United States. He was one of thirteen African American architects to be invited from across the country to a juried exhibition of work at Howard University (Washington, D.C.) in 1931. His work for the Buffalo parks department made him one of only three African American architects known to undertaken such important work for a municipality in the United States prior to federal civil rights legislation. His work for the zoo was one of his most important commissions.

Although the entrance court is the only surviving intact component of Brent's large body of work at the Buffalo Zoo, it is a distinctive and complete composition that illustrates typical federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) era park design and is representative of the aesthetic that Brent used for all his work at the zoo. Because African American landscape architects were greatly underrepresented in American society historically, because Brent was a recognized and prominent member of this profession, and because this is an extremely rare surviving example of his work, the Buffalo Zoo Entrance Court is worthy of nomination in the areas of landscape architecture and ethnic heritage.

The entrance court is also significant for its precast concrete animal sculptures created between 1938 and 1939 by WPA artists. There are two sculptures at each gate, each with different animals.

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT/ARCHITECT JOHN EDMONSTON BRENT**

John Edmonston Brent was born in 1889 and raised in Washington, DC. His father, Calvin T.S. Brent (1854 - 1899), was the first African American architect in Washington, DC after the Civil War. After John E. Brent completed his primary school (grades 1-8) studies he attended Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, from 1904-1907, studying carpentry and architecture. William S. Pittman, architect for the first "Colored YMCA" in America, was an instructor in the architectural department during Brent's first two years. Pioneer African

<sup>1</sup> Landscape architects were not licensed in this period

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American landscape architect David Williston was also a Tuskegee professor during Brent's first two years, teaching horticulture and landscape gardening. The professional works of Williston and Brent were later included in a juried exhibit at Howard University in 1931.

Brent returned to Washington and worked for the District of Columbia Parks Department for two years. He attended Drexel Institute in Philadelphia (1909-1912), where he studied architecture and took a course in landscape design. After graduating with a degree in architecture, he immediately moved to Buffalo and worked one to three year periods for a number of local architects until 1926. Brent took the New York State architect's examination in 1926 and received his license (#2977) in March, 1926. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the African American population of Buffalo had grown significantly and Black Buffalonians had become leaders in the national civil rights movement. Brent is credited as one of the founders of the Buffalo chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

At that time, public accommodations in the United States were segregated, even down to amusements, restaurants, drinking fountains and YMCA's. Under a challenge grant by the philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, twenty-one segregated YMCA's were built across the country to provide services for the African American community similar to those that the white population enjoyed. Rosenwald was the CEO of Sears & Roebuck and one of the wealthiest men in the country. He was initially interested in helping to fund YMCA's because he believed in the organization's mission and was unwilling to tolerate racial inequality. He put up 25 percent of the cost of a building, which was roughly \$125,000, if the local community could raise the remaining amount. Buffalo was the second city to accept the challenge, and Brent was selected to design and supervise the construction of the Michigan Street Y.M.C.A. Brent became the second African American architect to design a "Colored Y.M.C.A." in America. Rosenwald personally attended the opening dedication of the Michigan Street Y and commended Brent for his architectural design and construction supervision work.

Rosenwald was also instrumental in financing the Washington, DC segregated Y, once it had lost its funding from other sources. That Y, known as the 12th Street Y.M.C.A., is still standing and was the first "Colored Y.M.C.A." designed by an African American architect (W. Sidney Pittman, also a Tuskegee graduate). It was

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through Rosenwald's work with the Y's that he met Dr. Booker T. Washington and became a board member of Tuskegee. Together, Rosenwald and Washington began a school building program that provided more than 5,000 school houses across the south. A number of these so-called "Rosenwald Schools" have been listed on the National Register.

In Buffalo, local philanthropist George Matthews started a trust fund with a \$100,000 donation for the completion and maintenance of the YMCA. Known as the "Booker T. Washington Foundation," it was the largest donation ever made for the Y work among African Americans in the United States.<sup>2</sup> (Overall the Matthews family donated more than \$500,000 for the building and maintenance of the Michigan Avenue YMCA.) Brent served on the board of directors of the Michigan Street Y for more than thirty years, and he developed a landscape plan for a YMCA camp. Neither the Michigan Avenue Y nor the camp survives.

Following completion of the Michigan Avenue Y, Brent practiced architecture in Buffalo under his own name until 1930. In 1931 he was hired to work in the architect's office of the U.S. Department of the Interior in Washington D.C. In this position, Brent assisted Howard University campus architect Albert I. Cassell in preparing plans for dormitories and a classroom building at the historically Black college. Prior to Cassell's 1929 master plan, all of the buildings and grounds had been planned and designed by white architects and engineers with oversight from the interior department. Howard Mackey Sr., an African American architect who had been appointed to develop an academic architecture program at Howard, began to advocate for African American architects and engineers to plan and design buildings at Howard. In order to publicize their talent, Mackey organized a juried exhibit in May 1931 that included works by African American architects from all parts of the United States. Brent was one of thirteen African American architects selected to participate.

Brent's work for the U.S. Department of the Interior was completed in 1933 and he returned to Buffalo, where he was hired as a draftsman in the Buffalo Parks Department in 1935. Given his training and experience, Brent

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<sup>2</sup>Lillian S Williams, "To Elevate the Race: The Michigan Avenue YMCA and the Advancement of Blacks in Buffalo, New York, 1922-1940," in *New Perspectives on Black Educational History*, ed. Vincent P. Franklin and James D. Anderson (Boston: G.K. Hall, circa 1978), 132.

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was vastly overqualified to work as a draftsman, and it is unclear whether his underemployment can be attributed to the effects of the Depression or to racism. However, his experience with the interior department gave the city of Buffalo an advantage when it applied for WPA funding. Communities that did not have locally qualified architects and engineers required an outside professional assigned to prepare construction documents and supervise construction. With Brent on staff, Buffalo was exempt from this requirement. Research strongly suggests that Brent's work for the Buffalo Zoo was as a professional designer (see below). In 1936 Brent was promoted to the position of "junior landscape architect." Brent worked at the Buffalo Zoo until he retired, due to ill health, in 1957. He died in 1962 and is buried in Forest Lawn Cemetery

**SOCIAL/CULTURAL CONTEXT**

John Edmonston Brent worked at the Buffalo Zoo in a professional capacity as both a landscape architect and an architect. He worked on the design, planning, and implementation of more than a sixteen facilities and exhibits at the Buffalo Zoo from 1935-1937. His documented work includes the Bear Pit, Pheasant Building, Goat Island Shelter, Elephant House Fence and Manure Box, Russell Street Entrance, Monkey Island Moat Wall, and Seal Pool Drainage Plan. Evidence suggests that Brent was the person most responsible for implementing the details of the zoo's classical layout as it was developed during the 1930s. The proposed plan for the zoo published in 1924 shows the basic outline of a formal plan, including major east-west and northeast-southwest axes, a large semi-circular feature on the eastern edge and several smaller circulation features. Spaces were identified for animal exhibits. It also stipulated seven entrances into the zoo. This plan was signed by Buffalo city architect Harold L. Beck. Beck's work can be seen in several of the city's public schools and his 1913 Flemish Revival firehouse at 395 Amherst Street in Buffalo is one of his more highly styled examples extant. Major development of this plan did not commence until the zoo secured WPA funding in the early 1930s. As the zoo developed over the next decade, this plan was filled in with the more complex geometric components of a detailed circulation system, including additional axial and cross-axial roads and paths. Within and around this system, numerous smaller spaces were identified and developed as landscaped park areas, complex animal exhibit spaces, and less formal grounds for larger animals.

A great deal of research in the Buffalo Zoo's archives was undertaken before attributing the fully developed zoo landscape to John Brent. The head landscape architect for the Buffalo parks between 1934 and c1960 was

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Roeder J. Kinkel. Kinkel, who later ran a landscaping business with his two brothers, is believed to have acted in an administrative capacity, working primarily from his office in downtown Buffalo on overall management of the city's park system. Nevertheless, he is listed as the landscape architect on the zoo drawings, all of which he also signed and approved. J.B. Brent is noted as having drawn the plans, usually the job of a draftsman (though it can also be that of the designer). However, despite Brent's title, he was more than qualified to undertake the actual design work, and, unlike Kinkel, he had offices both downtown, at the park office, and at the zoo itself. Brent's descendants have attested that he went out to the zoo every afternoon. The more than forty original drawings initialed by Brent relating to exhibits and furnishings at the zoo from 1935 to 1957 do not account for every single feature that was constructed. However, a thorough search of the Buffalo city architect's office and other local archives turned up almost no other drawings for zoo features, suggesting that Brent worked out many of the details on site. Certainly the variety of projects documented by his drawings suggests that he had a hand in the overall development of the zoo. Only three names are found on all existing drawings found for the zoo: Roeder's, Brent's and those of H.M. Evarts, a civil engineer. While Roeder's name appears on all of them, Brent's and Evarts's names are found only on those projects that most logically require their particular expertise and skills. This distinction would not have been necessary were the two only acting as draftsmen.

The large number of drawings by Brent both authenticate his zoo work and record the evolution and change of exhibits at the Buffalo Zoo. They may also be one of the largest collections of drawings by an African American architect working on a civic/municipal project in the United States at the time, as only three other African American architects did such prominent work for a municipality in the United States prior to World War II and before federal civil rights legislation. Of them, Brent was the only one practicing both as a landscape architect and an architect. They others are:

Clarence Wesley "Cap" Wigington (1883-1967), worked as senior design architect for the City of St. Paul, Minnesota for 32 years (1917-1949). Sixty of his buildings still stand in St. Paul, with several listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

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John Louis Wilson, Jr. (1898-1989), employed as architect by the New York City Parks Department from the 1930s to the 1960s. He was commissioned to work with a team of architects to design the Harlem River Houses (National Register listed) and other public housing in New York City.

Louis Arnett Stuart Bellinger (1891-1946) practiced architecture in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Bellinger's single "landscape" commission, "Central Park," home field of the African American Pittsburgh Keystones baseball team (1920), has been demolished. From 1923-1926 Bellinger worked as an assistant architect in the Pittsburgh City Architect's office. The balance of his work was in private practice.

Brent was one of fewer than sixty licensed African American architects in the United States at the time. He was also one of the first, and one of fewer than six, African Americans to be recognized and simultaneously practice as both a landscape architect and a professional architect in America. Racial segregation and discrimination prevented African Americans from entering accredited design schools to study engineering, city planning, landscape architecture, or architecture. It was virtually impossible to acquire professional registration without the necessary academic credentials and apprenticeship opportunities. Brent became the fifth African American in history to join the American Institute of Architects in 1944, and he maintained his membership until 1959. The Buffalo Zoo Entrance Court is his largest and most complete surviving work.

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUFFALO ZOO**

The Buffalo Zoo is located in north central Buffalo, in the northeast corner of Delaware Park, and covers twenty three acres. The zoo is bounded by Amherst Street on the north, Parkside Avenue on the east, a park loop road on the south, and a park loop road on the west. The original 17.6 acre tract of 1870, which was set aside for the deer park and eventual zoo, was not fenced. Wrought-iron fences began to be erected c.1875, and the main visitor entrance was from the park drive on the south side of the zoo. A 1909 zoo master plan proposed the addition of visitor entrances from the west off Colvin Boulevard and from the north, approximately two hundred and fifty feet west of the intersection of Parkside Avenue and Amherst Street. After 1916, the International Railway Company (IRC) extended electric streetcar Route #9/Zoo/Kenmore north beyond the zoo along Parkside Avenue, making entrances from Parkside Avenue a necessity. In 1924, a new master plan was

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developed by Harold L. Beck, Buffalo city architect from c1912 to 1926. Beck's master plan provided the outline for a neoclassical layout and identified seven entrances to the grounds. Most of the entrances were oriented toward the south and east sides of the property. The entrance indicated near the corner of Amherst and Parkside was the only entrance in the northeast quadrant. It featured a single roadway leading to a semicircular island aligned on axis and covered with flowers

Brent's larger and more formal entrance court was planned and designed in two phases. The first section was designed in 1935 as the first phase of the new entrance composition. Detailed construction plans for gate #3 and #4 were designed and approved in October and November of 1935. The ensemble was composed of a landscaped circle, incorporating existing trees and a paved drive around its circumference (diameter from the center of the circle to the edge of the drive was 22 feet); around this was a larger circle including a fence with two gates, which extended another 22 feet from center. The fence was a low (2'-3", H x 550') curvilinear wall with native limestone veneer, intermediate piers, and wrought-iron fence infill; five seat walls (8'-6" H); cast stone sculptures on precast concrete bases mounted on masonry veneer plinths; two entrance pathways with flanking piers; and two wrought-iron gates (8'-6", H; 14'-6", W). These were originally identified as gates 7 and 1; however, they are now known as gates 3 and 4, respectively. The composition also included landscaped beds; and street trees.

The fence and streetcar shelter along Parkside Avenue was the second phase, planned and designed in 1937. This composition begins with a formal pier at the southwest corner of the Amherst Street and Parkside Avenue intersection and connects to a semicircular wrought-iron fence mounted on a low masonry wall. The semicircular wall connects to the northwest corner wall of a pavilion type streetcar shelter (15' W x 40' - 0" L x 10' - 6" H). The sidewalk width in front of the shelter tapers from 20' (W) to 16' (W). The fence resumes at the south end of the streetcar shelter and proceeds south for approximately sixty-two feet, where it abuts a chain link fence. The plans also called for formal piers on either side of the road and another section of fencing on the northeast corner. The entrance piers and the second section of fence were not constructed.

The layout of gates number 3 and 4 evolved between the 1924 and 1938 zoo master plans. The 1938 plan shows the two gates located immediately adjacent to one another. Gate 3 is oriented on a northeast-southwest

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axis from the 1924 master plan. Gate 4 is oriented approximately parallel to the north-south axis of the nineteenth-century south gate and the 1909-1924 master plans. The existing pedestrian paths are still aligned to these historic axes. The 1938 "Approved General Layout Plan" included a total of seven major visitor entrances. Although Brent did not design them all, his design established a prototype that was used, with some variation, at other entrances.

Brent's design for the entrance court is a formal composition that reflects the same City Beautiful aesthetic seen in the 1938 plan as a whole. Yet, the fence itself, with its combination of rusticated stone face, scrolled ironwork and intended lattice parapet, is a more eclectic feature that combines a variety of aesthetics common in park architecture in the period, in particular some of the national parks designed by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Together, these influences make the Buffalo Zoo Entrance Court a distinguished and attractive feature. It is also one of the last remnants of the zoo's important 1930s era of development.

### **WPA**

The Public Works Administration (PWA) was established in 1933 as part of the federal New Deal Program to build large scale public infrastructure projects such as electrical utilities, airports, highways, dams, bridges, hospitals and schools. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was established in 1935 to focus on relatively small projects and hire unemployed and unskilled workers. In 1939, after the WPA was abolished, the Federal Works Agency (FWA) took charge of both the PWA and the WPA. The FWA functioned until 1949, when the General Services Administration and U.S. Department of the Interior absorbed its responsibilities. During the 1930s, the Works Progress Administration funded construction of a number of zoos across America. The Buffalo Zoo benefited by receiving nearly \$2.8 million from the federal program between 1935 and 1944. These funds allowed the zoo to carry out its ambitious development scheme, and by 1947 it was considered one of the top six zoos in the United States based on the layout and character of its exhibits.

### **FEDERAL ART PROGRAM**

The Federal Art Project (FAP) operated in forty eight states from 1934-1943 under the WPA. Its main mission was to provide employment for out-of-work artists and provide art for non-federal government buildings. FAP

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artists created murals, paintings and sculpture for facilities such as libraries, hospitals, schools and multi-family housing. From 1938 to 1939 Robert Cronbach (1908-2001) was in charge of the Buffalo unit of the FAP, tasked with creating the sculpture at Buffalo's Willert Park public housing project (National Register eligible), which was implemented by the United States Housing Authority through the WPA. William Ernst Erich, an important artist of architectural sculpture and an instructor at the Art Institute of Buffalo, was appointed to supervise the large group of artists (sculptors and painters) that produced murals and sculpture for various projects at the Buffalo Zoo. However, due to limited administrative budgets, the artists themselves were essentially "self-supervised" and they remain anonymous. Among their most memorable projects for the zoo were the cast stone animals at the zoo entrance gates. These include four different compositions: a pair of beavers and a pair of badgers at gate 3 and a single baby elephant and a pair of baby bears at gate 4.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification

The boundary was drawn to include the full extent of the Buffalo Zoo Entrance Court as designed by John E. Brent between 1935 and 1938. The entrance court is defined as the two access roads from Amherst Street and Parkside Avenue, the two small islands and one connecting roadway between them, the traffic circle, both sections of stone and wrought iron fence, including the streetcar shelter and both gates, and all vegetation within this area.

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**JOHN EDMONSTON BRENT ZOO PROJECTS INVENTORY**

<u>DRAWING NO.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>STATUS</u>
C - 4 - 2	10-28-35	Working Drawing Entrance Court & Gateways, Gates 1 & 7	Extant
C - _ - _	03-23-36	Working Drawing Eagle, Hawk, Vulture, Owl Cage, Project 42424	Demolished
C - 4 - 9	05-01-36	Working Drawing Bear Pits (32" x 41 1/2")	Demolished
C - 4 - 12	05-01-36	Working Drawings Construction Details Bear Pits (20 1/4" x 42 1/4")	Demolished
C - 4 - 7	06-25-36	Details for Entrance Piers Revised 6-25-36/J.E.B.	Extant as part of gates #1 & #7
C - 4 - 15	06-11-36	Steps In Walks & Fence Around Moats	Altered
C - 4 - 17	06-15-36	Alternate Plan	Not Built

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of Roof Construction  
Pergolas in Entrance Court

C - 4 - 31	01-20-37	Working Drawing Amherst Street Entrance (25 3/4" x 44 1/4")	Altered
C - 4 - 37	03-20-37	Working Drawing Exhibit Poster Labels (19 3/4" x 24")	Demolished
<u>DRAWING NO.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>STATUS</u>
C - 4 - 39	03-22-37	Working Drawing Russell Avenue Entrance Court (14" x 25")	Extant
C - 4 - 41	04-29-37	Section Thru Bear Dens (17 3/4" x 25")	Demolished
C - 4 - 18	07-10-38	Working Drawing Beaver Exhibit	Demolished
C - 4 - 86	01-2-36	Working Drawing	Altered & parts

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		American Swamp, North American Plain & Goat Hill	demolished
C - 4 - 21	08-27-36	Detail of Moat of Wall at Monkey Island	Demolished
C - 4 - 22	08-31-36	Water and Drainage Lines About Bear Pits (26" x 38 1/2")	Demolished
C - 4 - 24	09-15-36	Working Drawing Pheasantry	Altered
C - 4 - 26	10-01-36	Detail of Skylight on Pheasantry	Altered
C - 4 - 27	10-23-36	Details Goat Hill (31 3/4" x 41 1/2")	Demolished
C - 4 - 33	02-22-37	Working Drawing Barnyard Exhibit (24 1/4" x 36")	Altered
<u>DRAWING NO.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>STATUS</u>
C - 4 - 47	09-21-37	Rock & Earth	Demolished

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		Hills in Goat Exhibit (23 1/2" x 42")	
C - 4 - 55	08-26-38	Working Drawing Plastered Moat Walls - Bear Pits (18" x 42 1/8")	Demolished
C - 4 - 60	03-21-39	New Gates in Fence Around Elephant Yard (18 1/4" x 30")	Demolished
C - 4 - 66	04-25-39	New Manure Box (18 5/8" x 30")	Demolished
C - 4 - 82	04-06-40	Poster Label Frames	Demolished
C - 4 - 99	05-08-40	New Entrance Gateways Colvin-Amherst & Jewett-Parkside Delaware Park	Not built
C - 4 - 84	06-12-40	Metal Plant Containers at Window Shelves in Mammals - Bldg. & Lion & Tigers Bldg.	Demolished

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Zoological Gardens

C - 4 - 10                      09-03-40                      Details Barn                      Extant, Altered  
(19 3/4" x 36 1/4")

C - 4 - 71                      01-18-41                      Fence Around Barnyard                      Demolished  
Barnyard  
(18 3/8" x 24 1/2")

C - 4 - 74                      03-31-41                      Grain Bins New Barn                      Demolished  
(18 3/8" x 35 1/2")

DRAWING NO.                      DATE                      DESCRIPTION                      STATUS

C - 4 - 80                      06-02-41                      New Light                      Demolished  
Standards -  
Zoological Gardens  
(17 3/8" x 36")

C - 4 - 102                      06-04-41                      Grading Plan                      Altered  
Parking Area  
(24 3/4" x 24 1/2")

C - 4 - 108                      02-14-51                      New Enclosing                      Altered  
Fences at  
Pheasantries  
(18 1/2" x 27 3/8")

C - 4 - 109                      02-19-52                      New Fences                      Altered  
(20 1/4" x 36 1/4")

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C - 4 - 111	08-18-52	Resurfacing Present Demolished Walks at Old Bear Pits (12 3/8" x 30")	
C - 4 - 112	12-30-52	New Fences (16 3/4" x 24 1/2")	Altered
C - 4 - 89	04-07-52	Plan of Island Eleven Reptile Cage Doors New Manholes in Present Sewer (24 1/4" x 35 1/4")	Altered
C - 4 - 122	08-26-57	Proposed Giraffe, Ostrich, Kangaroo Exhibit (17 7/8" x 18")	Not built
L - 370	12-27-51	Conversion of Present Comfort Station to Picnic Shelter at Front Park (16 1/2" x 25")	Altered

<u>DRAWING NO.</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>STATUS</u>
L - 412	06-26-53	Remodeling of Comfort Station for Picnic Shelter	Altered

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at Front Park  
(18" x 30")

L - 413	07-03-53	Remodeling of Comfort Station for Picnic Shelter at Front Park (18" x 24 1/4")	Altered
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**JOHN EDMONSTON BRENT PRIVATE PROJECTS INVENTORY**

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>CITY, STATE</u>	<u>YEAR</u>	<u>COMMENTS</u>
McGuire Medical Office	482 Jefferson Avenue	Buffalo, NY		Demolished
Michigan Avenue YMCA	585 Michigan Avenue	Buffalo, NY	1926	Demolished
Miles, Mitchell	400 Genesee Street	Cheektowaga, NY	c.1935	Demolished
Michigan Avenue YMCA Camp		Wales Hollow, NY	c.1936	Demolished
Payne, Clara		Eden, NY		Summer Cottage

**JOHN EDMONSTON BRENT HOWARD UNIVERSITY INVENTORY (MR. BRENT ASSISTED IN PREPARATION OF ARCHITECTURAL PLANS BETWEEN 1931 AND 1933; HE WAS NOT**

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ARCHITECT OF RECORD)

<u>NAME</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>STATUS</u>
Frazier Hall	1931	Women's Dormitory	Altered
Crandall Hall	1931	Women's Dormitory	Altered
Truth Hall	1931	Women's Dormitory	Altered
Chemistry	c.1940	Classroom	Altered

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John Edmonston Brent, date unknown





NOTE  
PRESENT BRIDGE PATH TO  
BE REMOVED AS DIRECTED

NOTE  
FOR ROAD GRADES ETC. SEE LATER  
DRAWING. CURB GRAPES ARE TO BE AS  
INDICATED HEREIN. FOR LOCATION OF  
REMOVING SEE LATER DRAWING.

NOTE  
THIS GATEWAY DETAILS TYPICAL  
FOR GATEWAYS # 2, 3, 4, & 5 EXCEPT  
THAT GATES & PIERS ARE NOT  
ON A CURVE.

SCALE ELEVATION GATEWAYS #1 & 7  
ALL JOINTING IN GATES TO BE WELDED  
ALL MATERIAL FOR GATES & FENCE TOPS SOLID WROUGHT IRON.

SCALE ELEVATION OF SEATS ETC. AT A

WORKING DRAWING  
ENTRANCE COURT & GATEWAYS  
NEW ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS  
DELAWARE PARK BUFFALO, N.Y.  
PREPARED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS  
FRANK A. COON COMMISSIONER  
ROEDER J. KINKEL LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT  
WILLIAM L. O'DAY ENGINEER

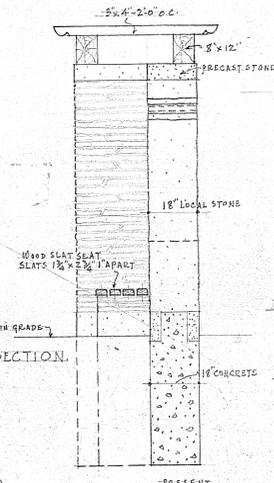
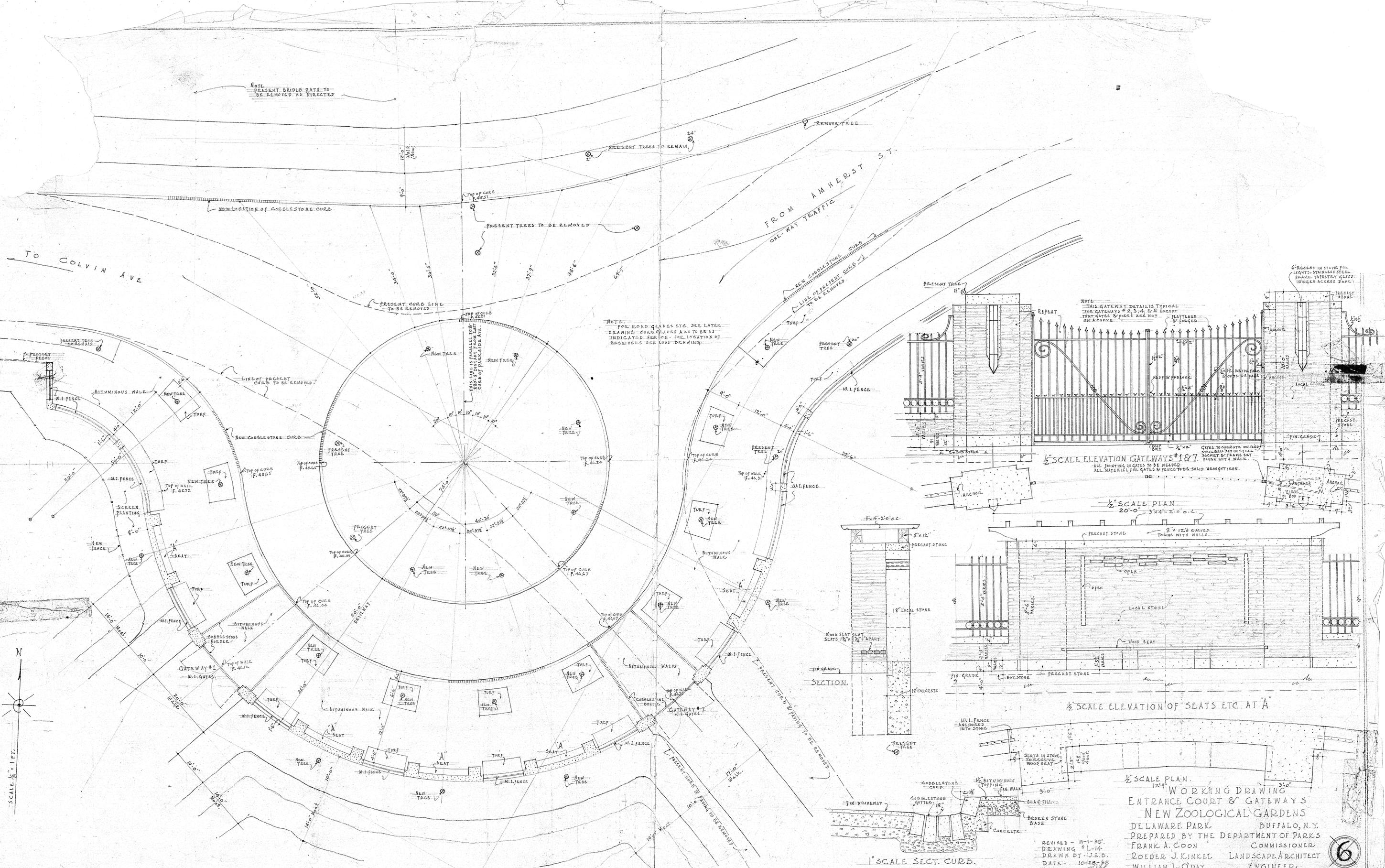
REVISED - 11-1-35  
DRAWING # L-14  
DRAWN BY J.E.D.  
DATE - 10-28-35  
APPROVED



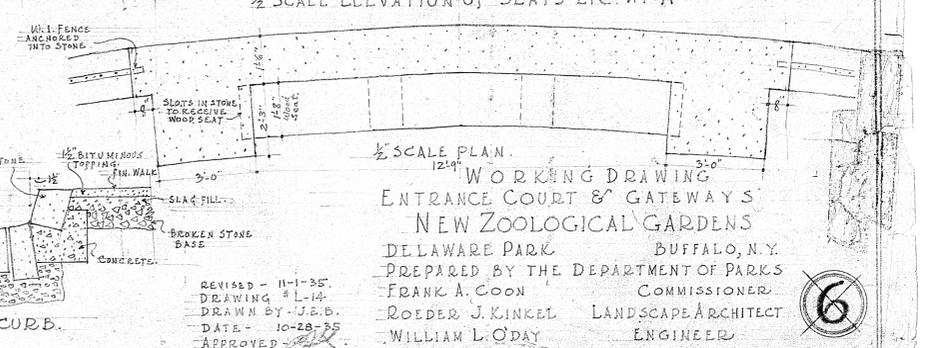
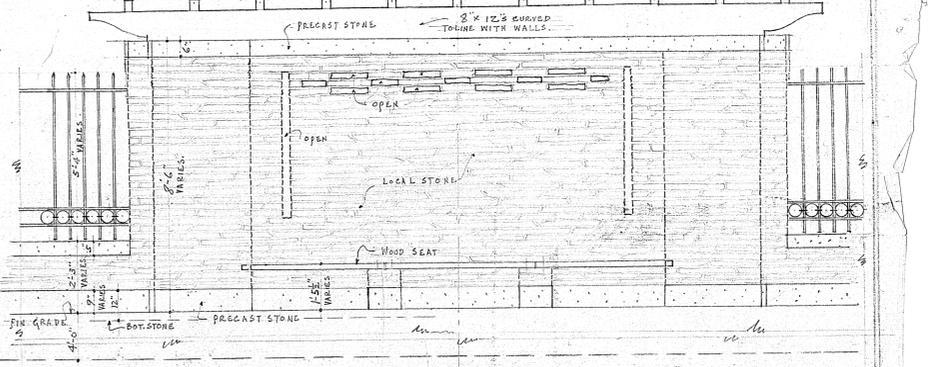
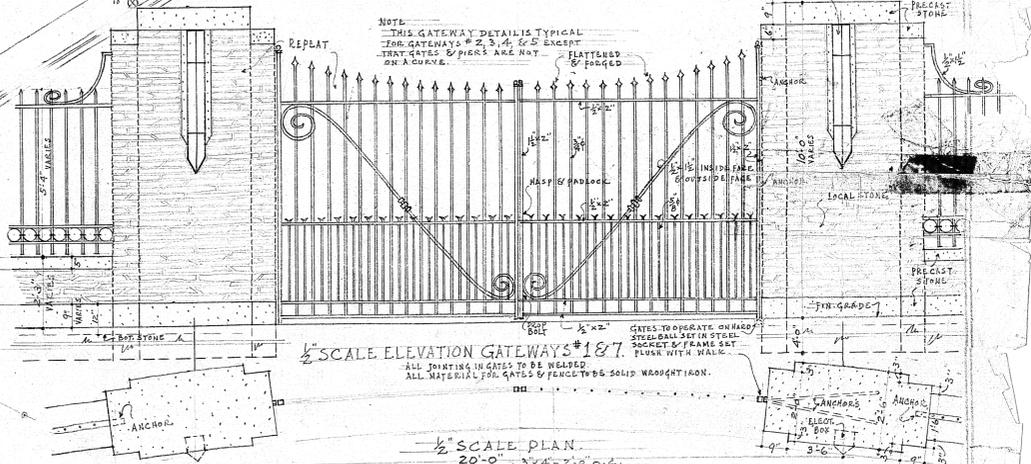
TO COLVIN AVE

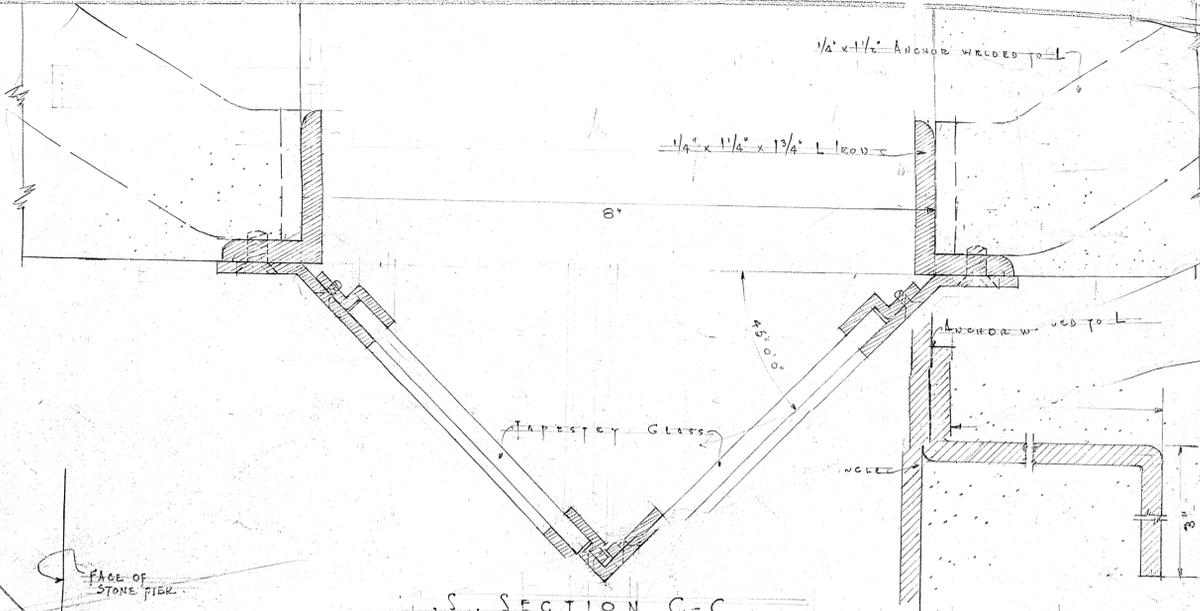
FROM AMHERST ST.  
ONE-WAY TRAFFIC

SCALE 1/8" = 1 FT.



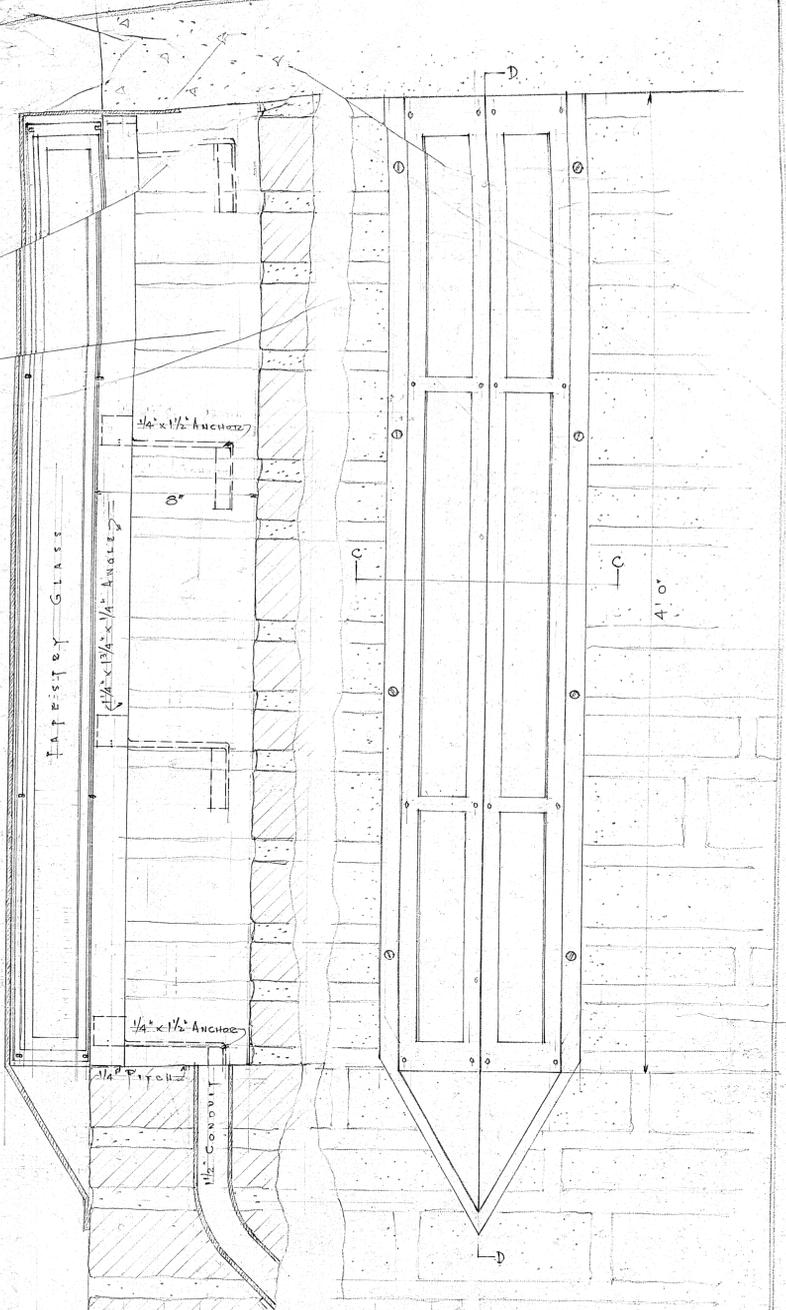
1" SCALE SECT. CURB.



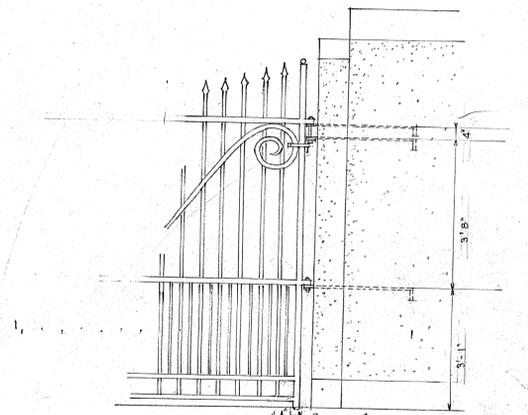


S.S. SECTION C-C

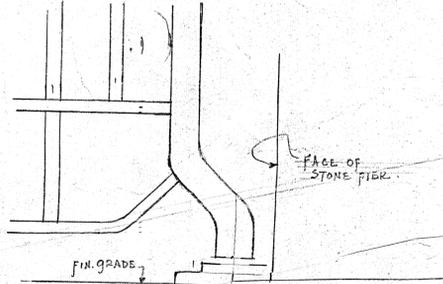
S.S. DETAIL OF ANCHOR



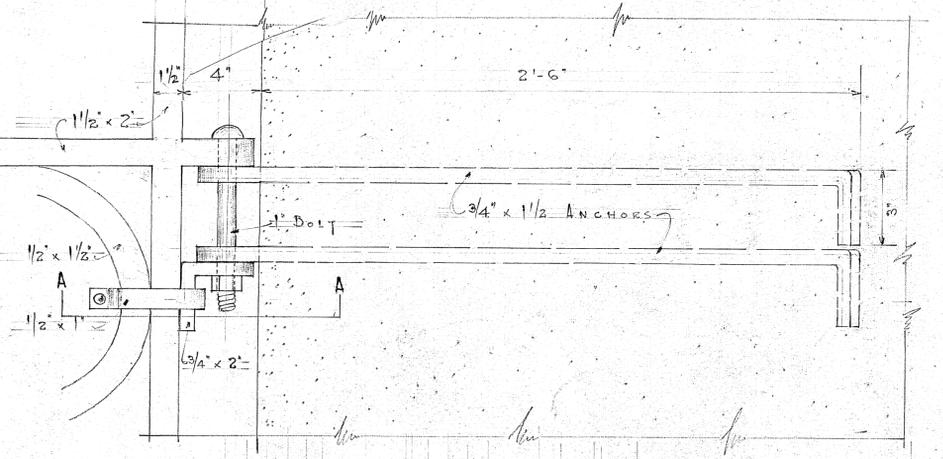
SECTION D-D ELEVATION SHOWING STAINLESS STEEL FRAME SCALE 3\"/>



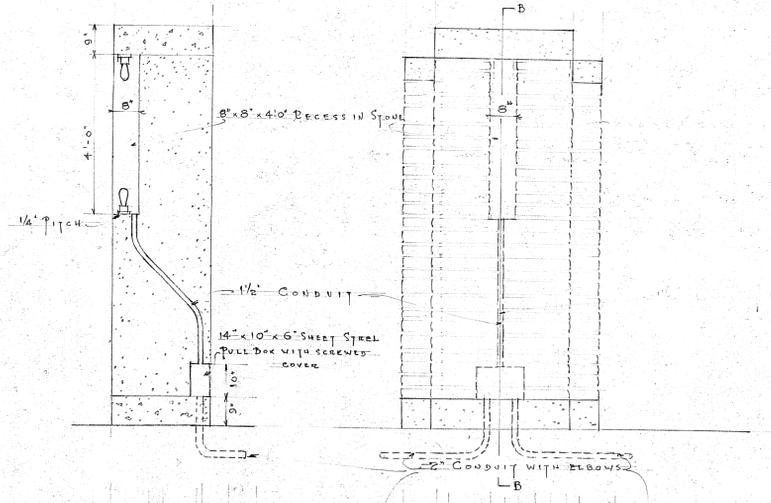
ELEVATION SHOWING LOCATION OF ANCHORS SCALE 1/2\"/>



3\"/>



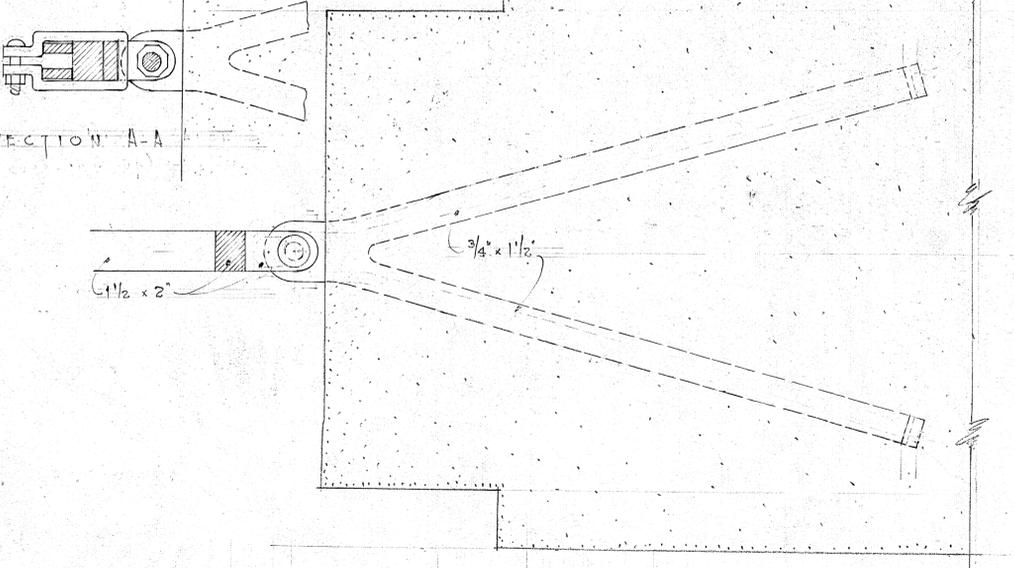
DETAIL OF UPPER ANCHORS



SECTION B-B SCALE 1/2\"/>

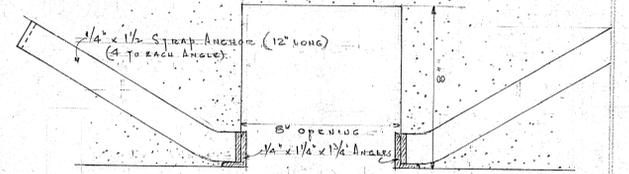
FRONT ELEVATION

PLAN OF PIER SHOWING ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT SCALE 1/2\"/>



SECTION A-A

PLAN OF GATE ANCHORAGE SCALE 3\"/>

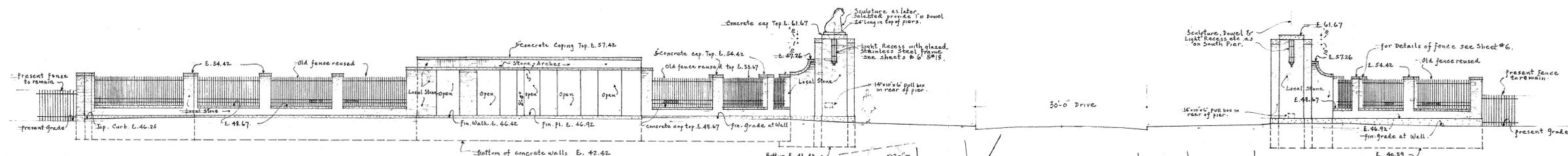


SECTION SHOWING ANCHORAGE FOR FRAME SCALE 3\"/>

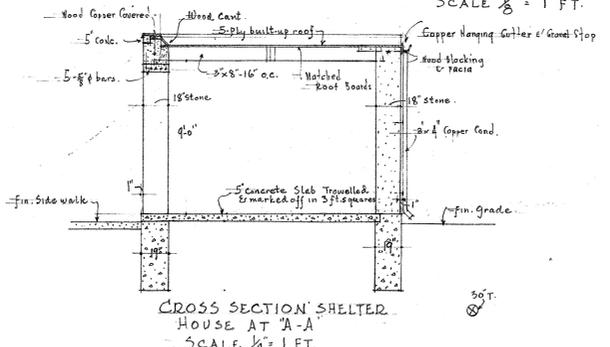
DETAILS FOR ENTRANCE PIERS  
NEW ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, BUFFALO, N. Y.

PREPARED BY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS  
FRANK A. COON COMMISSIONER  
ROBERT J. KIMMEL LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT  
SCALES - 1/2\"/>

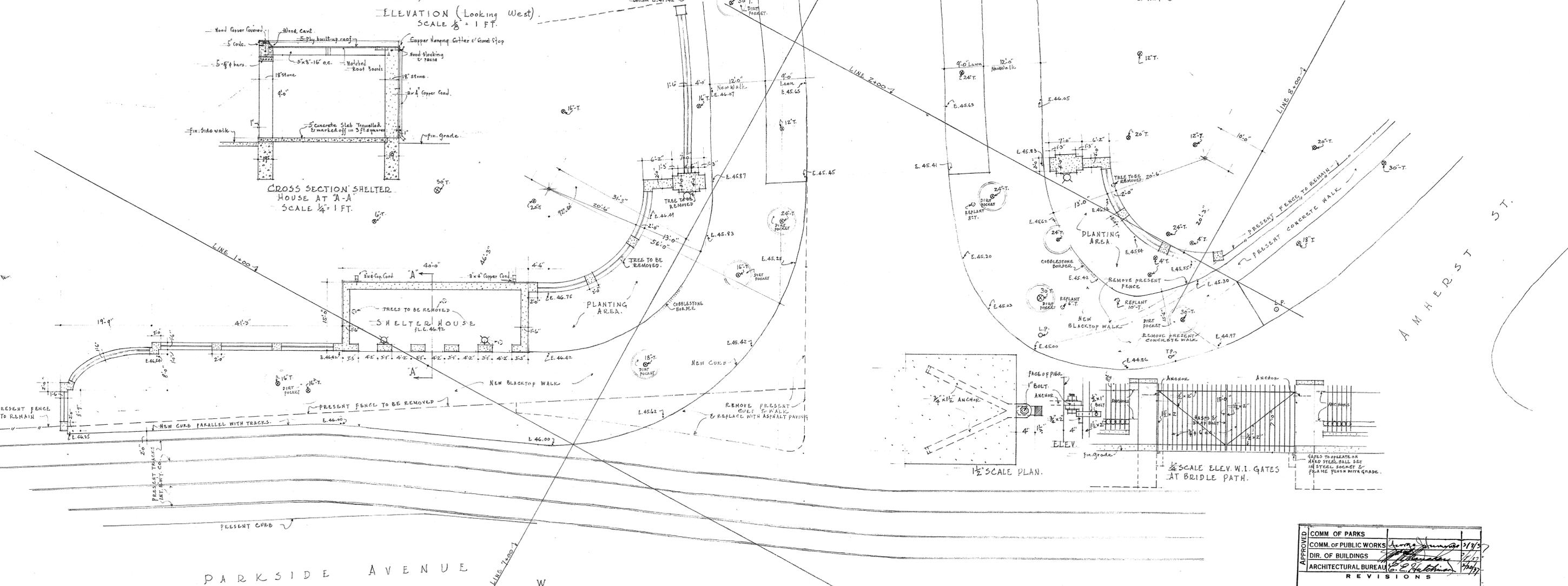
DRAWN 1/27/36  
BY E.J.S.  
APPROVED [Signature]  
REVISED 2/5/36  
REVISED 6-25-36 J.E.B.  
AC-4-37



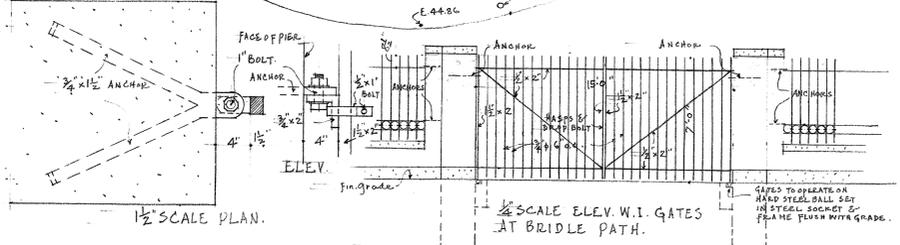
ELEVATION (Looking West)  
SCALE 1/8" = 1 FT.



CROSS SECTION SHELTER HOUSE AT A-A  
SCALE 1/4" = 1 FT.



PLAN.  
SCALE 1/8" = 1 FT.



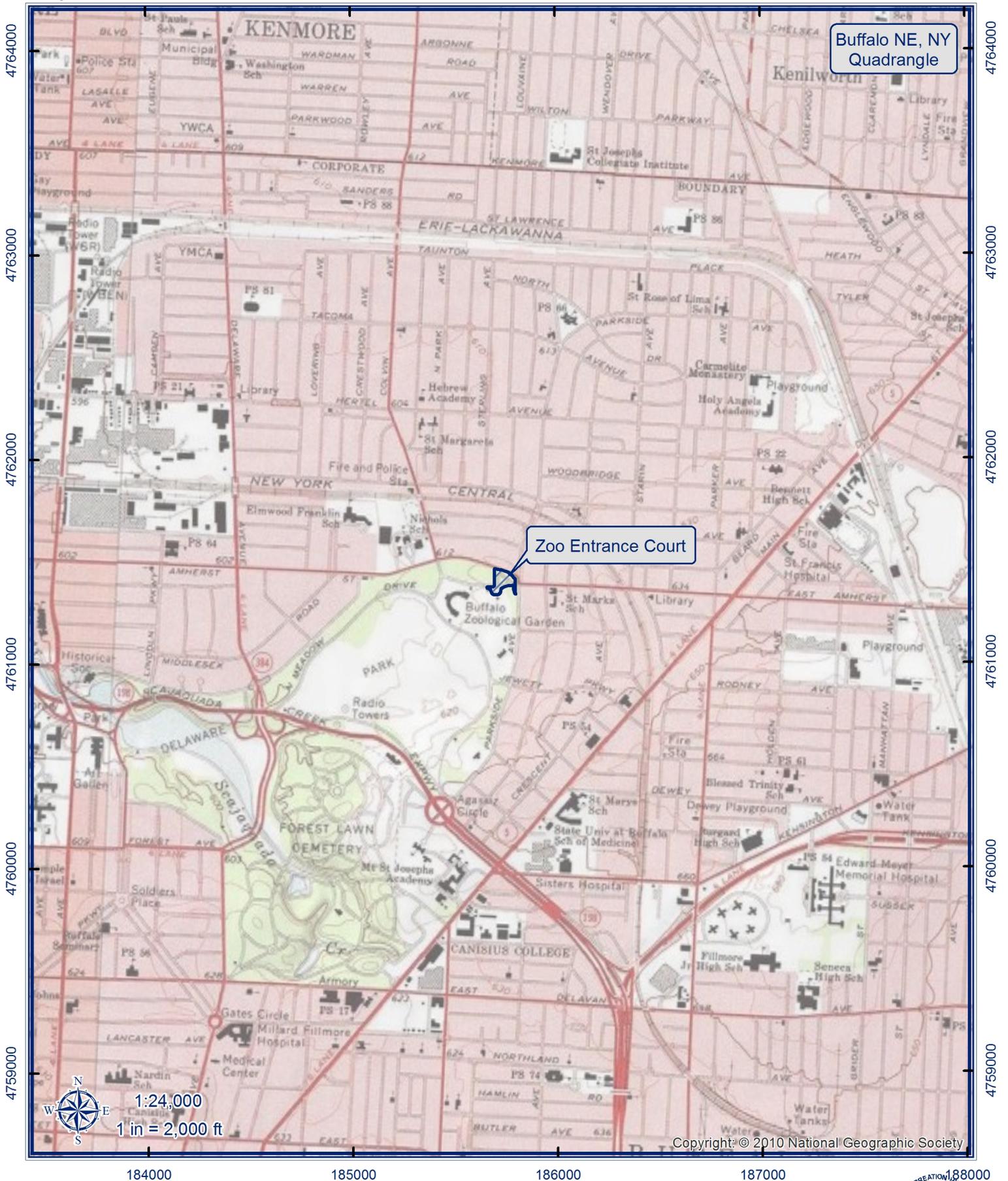
SCALE ELEV. W.I. GATES AT BRIDLE PATH.

APPROVED	COMM. OF PARKS	
	COMM. OF PUBLIC WORKS	<i>[Signature]</i> 1/24/37
	DIR. OF BUILDINGS	<i>[Signature]</i> 1/24/37
	ARCHITECTURAL BUREAU	<i>[Signature]</i> 1/24/37
REVISIONS		

WORKING DRAWING  
AMHERST STREET ENTRANCE  
NEW ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.  
DELAWARE PARK BUFFALO, N.Y.  
PREPARED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PARKS  
FRANK A. COON COMMISSIONER  
ROEDER J. KINKEL LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT.

DRAWN BY - J.E.B.  
DATE - 1-20-37  
APPROVED -

APPROVED -  
*[Signature]* 1/24/37  
COMM. OF PARKS



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter



 Zoo Entrance Court

Tax Parcel Data:  
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ENTRANCE



ENTRANCE  
←



DO NOT  
BLOCK DRIVEWAY



GATE 4

GATE 4

NO PARKING  
DO NOT  
BLOCK GATE

GATE 4











buffalozoo

