

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name** Blue Hills and Neponset River Reservations  
Multiple Reservations Area  
(Partial Inventory)

historic

and/or common Prehistoric and Historic Resources of the Blue Hills and Neponset River Reservations and Selected Adjacent Areas

## 2. Location

street & number Not applicable

☒ not for publication

city, town Canton, Milton, Quincy, Randolph, Braintree

— vicinity of

congressional district 10th and 11th

state Massachusetts

code 025

county Norfolk

code 021

## 3. Classification

### Category

☒ district  
☒ building(s)  
☒ structure  
☒ site  
☐ object

### Ownership

☐ public  
☐ private  
☒ both  
**Public Acquisition**  
☐ in process  
☐ being considered

### Status

☐ occupied  
☐ unoccupied  
☐ work in progress  
**Accessible**  
☒ yes: restricted  
☒ yes: unrestricted  
☐ no

### Present Use

☐ agriculture  
☐ commercial  
☐ educational  
☐ entertainment  
☐ government  
☐ industrial  
☐ military  
☐ museum  
☒ park  
☐ private residence  
☐ religious  
☐ scientific  
☐ transportation  
☐ other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name Multiple ownership; see continuation sheet

street & number

city, town

— vicinity of

state

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Norfolk, County Registry of Deeds

street & number 650 High Street

city, town Dedham

state

MA

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

date ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission, 294 Washington Street

city, town Boston

state

MA 02108



## 7. Description

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☒ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☒ ruins  
☒ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☐ altered

### Check one

☐ original site  
☐ moved date \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

### Boundary Justification and Location

The boundaries of this multiple resource nomination include the Blue Hills and Neponset River Reservations as well as adjacent acreage selected to include known sites and structures related to the development of the area. The resources wholly or partially outside the Reservation boundaries include the Lyon's Turning Mill and Fuller Quarry (#2) and the Massachusetts Hornfels/Braintree Slate Quarry Site (#15). This area is located southwest of Boston, nine to eleven miles from the State House and about ten miles inland from the Atlantic coast. It includes portions of the towns of Canton, Milton, Quincy, Randolph and Braintree, encompassing the major portion of the range known as the Blue Hills.

### Organization of the Text

The text of the multiple resource nomination is organized in the following manner. Sections seven and eight are divided into two parts. Part one in each section concerns prehistoric archaeological resources, while part two focuses on historic period sites and structures of the 19th and 20th centuries. Historic archaeological sites dating from the colonial period and the early 19th century exist in the multiple resource nomination area. To date, however, these resources have not been adequately researched or surveyed and are therefore not included in this nomination. If, after adequate investigation, historic archaeological sites within the multiple resource nomination area are found to meet National Register criteria, appropriate documentation concerning the sites will be forwarded to the National Register Office.

### Description

#### Part One Prehistoric Component

##### Topography

The archaeological resources of the Blue Hills and Neponset River Reservations lie within the Blue Hills Range, a series of hills which trend eastward and are six miles long and 3/4 to 1-1/2 miles wide. Within this region of hills, relief varies from 100 feet to the 635-foot elevation of Great Blue Hill. Bogs, swamps, ponds and two rivers are in close proximity to the hills and set in a secondary coniferous-deciduous forest marked by heavy undergrowth.

The physical history of the Blue Hills can be dated to the Paleozoic period, when its granites and volcanics originated. Folded and uplifted during the Appalachian orogeny at the end of the period, the Blue Hills underwent, yet largely resisted, a considerable timespan of erosion. The Quarternary period brought glaciation and its attendant land modification which resulted, upon glacial recession, in a landscape of ponds and lakes surrounded by outwash, moraine and kame deposits. The spruce forest which grew up around 13,500 B.P. remained dominant for nearly 4,000 years, gradually giving way to variations of coniferous-deciduous woodland which at 6,000 B.P. reached a composition not different



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DATE ENTERED	SEP 25 80

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

from that of the present. Within this environment existed fauna no longer found in the Blue Hills such as whitetailed deer, black bear, and turkey as well as species which still thrive there, including rabbit, fox, woodchuck and squirrels.

### Sites

At least nine prehistoric archaeological sites are known to exist either wholly or partially within the bounds of the Blue Hills and Neponset River Reservations. The complex Blue Hill River Site, a multi-component boulder-quarry and workshop was field tested by the avocational Excavators' Club of Cambridge in 1940 with inconclusive results (Rowe, 1941, Dincauze 1974). In 1976 a cultural resources management survey conducted within the Blue Hills Reservation identified three additional prehistoric sites, all of which yielded limited material remains exclusive of diagnostic artifacts (Luedtke, 1976). These four are a sample of the prehistoric sites within the multiple resource area which lack sufficient documentation and demonstrated significance necessary for National Register evaluation.

Two of the three prehistoric sites presented here for nomination to the National Register were discovered in the 1960s, the Ponkapoag Site (#16) in 1962 and the Green Hill Site (#14) in 1966, by members of the avocational Massachusetts Archaeological Society. A smaller team of avocationalists, the Eastern Massachusetts Archaeological and Geological Research Group, Inc. located and surveyed in 1974 the remaining site, the Massachusetts Hornfels/Braintree Slate Quarry (#15).

Collectively, the nominated sites represent aboriginal occupation in the Blue Hills extending from the Early Archaic (7500 B.C.) through the Late Woodland period (pre-1550 A.D.). Site functions interpreted from material remains and features indicate an adaptation to and exploitation of a hilly landscape containing outcrops of high-grade lithics bordered by water sources at lower elevations. Activities at the three sites included seasonal encampment, specialized procurement and processing and quarrying.

The sites exhibit an interesting spatial spread, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Ponkapoag Site (#16),



## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet, Item number 8-9, Page 4-1

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

## 10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property 141 acres  
Quadrangle name Blue Hills, MA, Norwood, MA

Quadrangle scale 1 : 24000

### UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>9</u>	<u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>2</u> <u>3</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>8</u> <u>8</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>1</u> <u>9</u>	<u>3</u> <u>3</u> <u>3</u> <u>1</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>8</u> <u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>
E	<u>1</u> <u>9</u>	<u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>5</u> <u>1</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>1</u> <u>5</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>
G	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>

B	<u>1</u> <u>9</u>	<u>3</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>8</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>9</u> <u>2</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D	<u>1</u> <u>9</u>	<u>3</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>7</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>2</u> <u>7</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>
F	<u>1</u> <u>9</u>	<u>3</u> <u>2</u> <u>2</u> <u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>5</u> <u>5</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u>
H	<u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u>

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See Section 7, paragraph one.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Stephen A. Cole and Sara B. Chase, Architectural Researcher, SPNEA  
organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date June 1980  
street & number 294 Washington Street telephone 617-727-8470  
city or town Boston state MA 02108

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☒ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Peter H. Westbrook

title Executive Director, Massachusetts Historical Commission date 7/30/80

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: Patrick J. Adams  
Chief of Registration

date 8/25/80

date 9/15/80



(11/78)

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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AUG 13 1980

DATE ENTERED

5

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

7

PAGE

3

a seasonal camp first occupied during the Early Archaic

the Green Hill Site (#14) is found. From the Middle Archaic onward, the site served as the best point of access from the Neponset River

the site also served as a location for processing of an undetermined kind which is indicated by the numerous cutting and scraping tools recovered.

Massachusetts Hornfels/Braintree Slate Quarry (#15). Located in a terrain of scrub oak and bull briar, the complex is a series of prehistoric man-made as well as natural features containing pits, trenches, outcrops and glacial boulders. From 7,000 B.P. until the early 17th century, the quarry was used continuously as a source for slate and hornfels valued by eastern Massachusetts prehistoric cultures in the manufacture of chipped and ground stone tool forms. Its materials are found on sites in the majority of eastern Massachusetts drainages.

**Part Two Historic Component**

During the colonial period and for much of the nineteenth century, land use in the Blue Hills region was light. Although little research has focused upon this time period, indications are that at least one half dozen homesteads were operating in the late 18th and early 19th centuries on the level margins of land which border the Blue Hills Range. Thin soils set in a rocky, upland environment made the area generally unsuitable for agricultural production, and considerable documentary and archaeological research will be necessary in order to discover the basis for early historic period settlement.

Since the early 19th century, granite from Quincy quarries had been cut and sold on a substantial, commercial scale. Within the northeast portion of the multiple resource nomination area, the Lyons Turning Mill and Fuller Quarry (#2) are indicative of this important industry in the economic life of 19th century Quincy. The turning of granite columns began at the Lyons Mill in 1894; the mill ceased operation in 1917.

The major historic period of the Blue Hills Reservation dates from the establishment of the Metropolitan District Commission, set up in 1892



(11/78)

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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AUG 13 1980

DATE ENTERED

25

1980

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

7

PAGE

4

and empowered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to preserve open spaces around Boston in a comprehensive manner. Unhampered by local communities' boundaries and their limited concerns, the MDC was able to operate so that the whole of the metropolitan Boston park and reservation system could be more than the sum of its parts. Three of the most vital of their specific goals were: 1) "to provide wholesome areas to which to remove children from other forms of amusement more detrimental physically and morally," 2) to aid in preventing water pollution by supervising rivers and ponds, and 3) to prevent realtors from subdeveloping certain wooded areas in periods of rapid population expansion and movement out of the city. The provision applying to the Blue Hills Reservation called for reserving or setting aside for natural conservation and public recreational benefit some 2,000 acres.

The initial surveying of such a vast area in order to rationalize the boundaries of the takings (by eminent domain) proceeded under the supervision of Charles Eliot, a principle in Frederick Law Olmsted's firm. By July of 1894, more than 30 miles of boundary lines had been surveyed and mapped. Notebooks containing the notes and tracings of these surveyors, including Eliot, remain in the MDC archives.

By 1895 the Blue Hills Reservation had grown to nearly 4,000 acres and 11-1/2 miles of fire roads had been built. A record 2,100 persons climbed to the top of the Great Blue Hill on the third Sunday in October, indicating that the combination of burgeoning population and expanding street car lines indeed made the establishment of an extensive public park system around Boston a vital element in the moral and physical welfare of the populace.

Between 1900 and 1916 most of the historically important MDC structures in the Blue Hills were built. Boston architects Stickney and Austin designed a "sanitary" (#4) bathhouse, pavillion (#5), MDC police headquarters (#11) and a stable (#12), and altered an old farm house for a superintendent's dwelling. Materials included local Quincy granites and dark-stained timbers; styles and forms ranged from neo-classic to rustic chalet.

The most important structure in the Blue Hills Reservation was built, however, almost ten years before the Reservation was formally defined. A. Lawrence Rotch, one of America's most inventive meteorologists, used the top of the Great Blue Hill as the site for his weather observatory (#1), a thoroughly logical choice, as this elevation was the highest spot within ten miles of the Atlantic coastline from Maine to Florida.



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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AUG 13 1980

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 5

The design of this building was evidently determined by Rotch, and although his crenellated tower was raised with an added story in c. 1916 and rebuilt of reinforced concrete, the original design integrity is unimpaired (except by present maintenance neglect).

In addition to the public recreational facility structures and park patrol (police) headquarters, a few farmhouses exist in the Blue Hills Reservation. One, the Redman Farm (#13) of c. 1795, is at the edge of the Ponkapoag Golf Course in a busy public street, a reminder of the farming that surrounded the Blue Hills on the more level land south of the range in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Another old farm, especially the barn (#7), stands on Hillside Street on land recently given to the Reservation by Henry Howe.

To express building uses in percentages is somewhat misleading when so few buildings are included in the Multiple Resource Area, but the percentages would be, approximately:

60% recreational  
20% scientific and museum  
10% residential  
10% other

In physical relation to each other, these buildings are widely scattered over the 6,600 acres of the Reservation, and have not been moved. Together, however, they form a coherent collection of architectural landmarks vital to the history and interpretation of the Blue Hills and the Neponset River Reservations.

Survey Methodology

This area has been surveyed by Sara B. Chase, Architectural Researcher of the Consulting Services Group of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. Volunteer historians and archaeologists were also involved. The entire area was inspected for architectural landmarks, but archaeological surveying over so many acres, while in progress under the auspices of the South Shore Chapter of the Massachusetts Archaeological Society is unfinished. Subsurface archaeological testing has been done in several portions of the Multiple Resource area, starting early in this century and continuing at present. The criteria

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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RECEIVED

AUG 13 1980

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

7

PAGE

6

used to identify and assess the properties included historical, architectural, associational, and scientific significance; uniqueness, design quality, relation to the whole; and value as an irreplaceable resource.

The inventory forms which follow constitute a "partial inventory" as defined by the Interim Guidelines for Multiple Resource Nomination Forms of 1977, and include known, significant prehistoric archaeological sites as well as historic structures. Historic archaeological sites known to exist within the Blue Hills and Neponset Rivers Reservations have not been adequately surveyed or documented to date and are therefore not included in the nomination.



## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### Part One Prehistoric Component

The discovery and study of the Ponkapoag (#16), Green Hill (#14) and Massachusetts Hornfels/Braintree Slate Quarry (#15) sites have helped to bring about a renewal of interest in the prehistory of the Greater Boston area. Previous to the 1960s, little professional survey or excavation had occurred in the region and a prehistorian was able to write that, "Amateur archaeologists and collectors continued to make casual finds in the area, but the myth grew that there were no worthwhile sites left."<sup>1</sup> "The area's prehistory was widely dismissed as marginal and static."<sup>2</sup>

The nominated sites of the Blue Hills and Neponset River Reservations are important additions to the body of prehistoric sites documented in the Boston area. They have yielded and will continue to yield information important in the prehistory of New England. The significance of the Massachusetts Hornfels/Braintree State Quarry (#15) is derived from its use as a major lithic source area for regional aboriginal populations from the Early Archaic to the Contact period. Archaeological data at the site has the potential to provide a chronological framework for those cultures which utilized the quarry resources, and can yield information on the activity pattern of different cultures at the quarry. Regional archaeological data could also provide for the study of the dispersal of particular lithics by people of several cultural complexes which might disclose discrete cultural areas and migration routes (Bowman and Zeoli, 1977:47).

The Ponkapoag (#16) and Green Hill (#14) sites are two of the last relatively intact sites remaining in the Blue Hills region where it is possible to study the activities of prehistoric groups exploiting this unique environment. Of especial interest at the Ponkapoag site has been the recovery of nearly 300 examples, complete and fragmentary, of the semi-circular slate knife or ulu. This specific tool is of unknown origin and antiquity at present. As reported by the excavators at Ponkapoag (Martin, 1977), ulus were often associated on levels with Middle Archaic Stark and Neville points. Neville points are probably 8,000 years old (Dincauze, 1976), and the association of ground stone tools in this context at the Ponkapoag site is one of the earliest in the Americas at the present date.

<sup>1</sup>Dena F. Dincauze, "An Introduction to Archaeology in the Greater Boston Area," Archaeology of Eastern North America 2, no. 1 (Spring 1974), 39.



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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RECEIVED	AUG 13 1980
DATE ENTERED	SEP 25 1980

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Both the Green Hill (#14) and Ponkapoag (#16) sites contain important Middle Archaic components, and indications are that the presence and number of Middle Archaic sites in the Blue Hills region is unique in the Northeast. The numbers of Middle Archaic sites within the drainage surrounding the greater Blue Hills area indicate a familiarity with and an extended occupation of the region. Investigations and analysis of the Neville site in Manchester, New Hampshire (Dincauze, 1976) has provided a perspective within which to view the manifestations present on the Ponkapoag (#16) and Green Hill (#14) sites. Research at each site will continue to provide information on settlement patterns and resource adaptation of prehistoric peoples during the Middle Archaic period. An archaeologist has noted that better data of this kind is necessary for Middle Archaic sites and the information on seasonality of occupation, resources specialization, activity patterns and intensity of occupation might be forthcoming from such area sites (Dincauze, 1971).

It is important to note that the three nominated prehistoric sites represent but a very small sample of the probable prehistoric loci within the Blue Hills region. At least six other prehistoric sites are known to exist within the Multiple Resource Area, but remain under evaluated at this time. As an area rich in faunal, lithic and water resources, the region should be considered to harbor many as yet undiscovered prehistoric sites potentially eligible for the National Register. Those planning for the future use of the Blue Hills and Neponset River Reservations and surrounding areas should consider archaeological resources within the planning process and provide for the proper evaluation of such resources.

Part two Historic Component

The significance of the archaeological remains of early historic settlement in the Blue Hills regions is unknown at this time. Further research will be necessary before it can be determined whether these resources contribute to the significance of the multiple resource nomination area. The value of the Blue Hills' most notable natural resources, granite, was realized early in the nineteenth century when the stone was first quarried commercially. The Lyons Turning Mill and Fuller Quarry (#2) within the multiple resource nomination area retain a strong association with Quincy's granite industry. The structural remains of the granite column turning mill is the last visible feature of the many granite working structures once found among the quarries.

As Boston's population was swelling with immigrants, recreational use of the area increased in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. A favorite spot for a hiking destination was the top of the Great Blue Hill, from which the view of Boston was superb.

The exceptional height of this summit and its proximity to the ocean made it well suited to scientific observation of the weather. In 1885 A. Lawrence Rotch designed an observatory tower (#11) which was constructed atop the the Great Blue Hill. Rotch, and his assistant, Holman, devised and sent aloft the first instruments, kites, and balloon for recording wind velocity, air temperature, and relative humidity in the upper atmosphere. From the data they gathered from these observations, they were able to predict the weather with far more accuracy than ever before. It is not too extreme



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HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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RECEIVED

AUG 13 1980 25

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

3

to say that modern meteorology began at the Great Blue Hill Weather Observatory. Within ten years after construction of the Observatory, the Metropolitan District Commission had hired Charles Eliot, a member of Frederick Law Olmsted's landscape architecture firm, to survey the projected Blue Hills Reservation boundaries. Eliot's work continued over nearly three years and included as well an inventory of the trees in the area.

When recreational use in the early twentieth century reached a point of straining the continuation of the area as a "wilderness," the MDC hired the well-known Boston architectural firm of Frederick W. Stickney (1853-1918) and William D. Austin (1850-1944) to design some picturesque structures to serve the public needs. In quick succession during the years from 1899 to 1916 they built a "sanitary," a picnic pavillion, a park guard headquarters and stable, and a caretaker's house. Later some bath houses were added at Houghton's Pond, and in 1905 a small bridge commemorating Charles Eliot's work was built.

During the 1920s, '30s, and '40s the area around Ponkapoag Pond was developed first by the Appalachian Mountain Club, and later, within the last 57 years, by the Boston YMCA for camping and nature study.

An event of considerable significance but highly negative impact has been the reconstruction of Route 128 in the mid-1960s. A small road was turned into a six-to-eight lane highway flanked by industrial development, which threatens the southern and western edges of the Blue Hills Reservation.

One of the important figures in the contemporary affairs of the Blue Hills Reservation is Henry Howe, who has generously given some seventy acres of his land to be added to the Reservation--land which will help to provide a buffer between the Great Blue Hill and Route 128.

At present preservation/restoration activities within the Multiple Resource Area are limited to maintenance of trails and existing structures, with barely adequate funds.

Individual sites have been chosen because of their historic significance as a group; no districts are included because there are no cohesive groups of structures in the Multiple Resource Area.

The two observation towers are listed (#8, #10), although they are not quite fifty years old, because they are important, integral elements of the total ensemble of structures in the Blue Hills Reservation. Built of native



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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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AUG 13 1980

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8-9

PAGE

4 - 1

granite, with pleasing proportions and design, they are particularly vital because they accent the two highest elevations in the Blue Hills.

Comprehensive Plan: State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) on file at Metropolitan District Commission, 20 Somerset Street, Boston.

Bibliography

Item 9

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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AUG 13 1980  
DATE ENTERED SEP 25 1980

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 2

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