National Park Service
Cultural Landscapes Inventory

2010

Revised: 6/2025



Dorchester Heights National Historic Site

Boston National Historical Park

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Introduction

The Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI)

The Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) is a comprehensive inventory of all cultural landscapes in the National Park System. Landscapes that are listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places, or are otherwise managed as cultural resources and in which the National Park Service has, or plans to acquire, legal interest are included in the inventory. The CLI identifies and documents each landscape's location, size, physical development, landscape characteristics, character-defining features, and condition. Cultural landscapes have approved CLIs when concurrence with the findings is obtained from the park superintendent and all required data fields are entered into the Cultural Resources Information System (CRIS-CL) database. In addition, for landscapes not currently listed on the National Register and/or without adequate documentation, concurrence is required from the State Historic Preservation Officer, Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, or the Keeper of the National Register.

Scope of the CLI

The information contained within the CLI is compiled from primary and secondary sources and through on-site surveys of the landscape. The level of investigation is dependent upon scoping the need for information. The baseline information collected provides a comprehensive look at the historical development and significance of the landscape. Documentation and analysis of the existing landscape identifies character-defining characteristics and features and allows for an evaluation of the landscape's integrity and an assessment of the landscape's condition. The CLI also includes historic maps, drawings, and images; photographs of existing conditions; and a site plan that indicates major features. The CLI documents the existing condition of park landscape resources and identifies impacts, threats, and measures to stabilize condition. This information can be used to develop strategies for improved stewardship. Unlike a Cultural Landscape Report (CLR), the CLI does not provide management recommendations or treatment guidelines for the cultural landscape, but it may identify stabilization measures.

The Cultural Resources Information System (CRIS)

CRIS is the National Park Service's database of cultural resources on its lands, consisting of archeological sites, historic structures, ethnographic resources, and cultural landscapes. Cultural Resources Inventory System (CRIS) replaces three legacy inventory systems: ASMIS (archeology), CLI (cultural landscapes), and LCS (historic structures); and it reinstates the former ERI (ethnographic resources). This Cultural Landscape Inventory document reflects the information in a corresponding CRIS Cultural Landscape record.

Statutory and Regulatory Foundation

The legislative, regulatory, and policy directives for conducting and maintaining the CLI within CRIS are:

- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (16 USC 470h-2(a)(1)) Sec. 110
- Executive Order 13287: Preserve America, 2003. Sec. 3 (a and c)
- Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Federal Agency Historic Preservation Programs
- Pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act, 1998. Std. 2
- Cultural Resource Management Guideline, 1997, Release No. 5, page 22; issued pursuant to Director's Order #28 (DO-28)

The NHPA requires the identification, evaluation, and nomination of historic properties to the National Register of Historic Places and the maintenance and expansion of an inventory of cultural resources. DO-28 requires a cyclic assessment of the current condition of cultural landscapes based on an assessment interval, with a default of six years.

Use

Beyond fulfilling legal and policy requirements, park staff can use the Cultural Landscape Inventory in the following ways:

- To learn about park cultural landscapes (all staff)
- To inform management decisions (park managers)
- To inform project planning and development (park managers, facility managers, project managers, compliance specialists)
- To monitor the condition of the cultural landscape and take measures to protect its significance and integrity (cultural resource managers, facility managers)
- To recognize the stabilization and treatment needs of landscape features and plan work within cultural landscapes to address the needs (facility managers, cultural resource managers)
- To understand the cultural value of natural systems in a cultural landscape (natural resource managers)
- To create programming and educational materials based on site history (interpretation and education specialists)
- To recognize impacts within cultural landscapes and enforce protection measures (visitor and resources protection staff)

General Information

Property Level and CLI Numbers

Inventory Unit Name: Dorchester Heights National Historic Site

Resource Classification: Cultural Landscape

CLI Identification Number: 650022

Parent Landscape: 650022

Inventory Status: Complete

Park Information

Park Name: Boston National Historical Park

Alpha Code: BOST

Park Organization Code: 1725

Park District: BOST

Region: Northeast

Restricted: Yes

Landscape Description:

Located in the central portion of South Boston on the summit of Telegraph Hill, the westernmost of the twin hills that comprise Dorchester Heights, the 5.43-acre Dorchester Heights National Historic Site consists of the Dorchester Heights Monument and a parcel called Thomas Park. The site commemorates the fortification by General George Washington and his army that forced the British evacuation of the British troops from Boston. At the site's summit is the Dorchester Heights Monument, a 100-foot tall white marble tower built in 1901 by Boston architects Peabody and Stearns to commemorate the American fortifications. The monument is the focal point of the elliptical-shaped Thomas Park, which is bound in more a less in a circular fashion on the north, west, and south by the street known as Thomas Park. The South Boston High School is adjacent to the park on the east side. Thomas Park was originally developed in the early 1850s and, in addition to the tower, is comprised of curvilinear walks, walls, and steps set amongst sloping lawns dotted with shade trees and other smaller monuments. The Dorchester Heights Monument and Thomas Park were designated Dorchester Heights National Historic Site in 1951, and in 1980 it became part of Boston National Historical Park. In 2001, the site also became part of the Dorchester Heights Historic District, a 40-acre residential neighborhood that surrounds Dorchester Heights National Historic Site.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Dorchester Heights National Historic Site commemorates one of the early military successes of the Revolutionary War that forced the evacuation of the British from Boston. On the night of March 4, 1776, under the cover of darkness, the Continental Army assembled a series of fortifications, called "chandeliers," as a line of defense against British forces stationed on nearby Castle Island. The Continental Army held Dorchester Heights until the British evacuation of Boston on March 17, 1776. In May 1776, the site was refortified with a star-shaped fort as a precaution against a future British attack. Abandoned at the end of the Revolutionary War, the fortifications were re-manned and modified during the War of 1812 as a defensive measure. No battles were fought there during the War of 1812, but remnants of the fortifications remained until the development of the site as a public park around 1850.

In 1847, more than 1,700 residents of South Boston sent a petition to the Mayor of Boston requesting park spaces and that South Boston be connected with the Cochituate water system. This resulted in the construction of the South

Boston Reservoir on the eastern portion of the Telegraph Hill summit and Thomas Park on the western portion. It is believed that construction for Thomas Park took place between 1852 and 1854. The design of the park was simple, featuring symmetrical, curving pathways, and deciduous tree plantings. In 1876, a memorial was planned to celebrate the centennial of Dorchester Heights fortifications that ended British occupation, and in 1877 a granite Centennial Monument was installed on the site, commemorating the one-hundredth anniversary of the March 1776 fortifications.

In the 1890s, local citizens began requesting a more substantial monument at Thomas Park. A competition was held, and a design for a tower from the Boston architectural firm of Peabody and Stearns featuring Georgian and Colonial Revival elements was selected as the winning entry. The tower was constructed from 1901 to 1902 on the high point of the site, and dedicated on March 17, 1902, the 126th anniversary of the British evacuation of Boston. In 1927, the Henry Knox Monument was installed on the site to commemorate Knox's role in acquiring and placing cannons on Dorchester Heights in March 1776.

In the course of its history, the Dorchester Heights National Historic Site has been under the stewardship of five entities. It was paid for by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and its design and construction overseen by the Committee on Design by the Governor's Council (1898-1905). Its care and maintenance became the responsibility of the City of Boston's Department of Common and Public Grounds (ca. 1906-1912). In 1912, the Department of Common and Public Grounds was dissolved and the Boston Park Department assumed responsibility for both the monument and park (1912-1951) (HSR 1993:20). Under the terms of a cooperative agreement signed by the Secretary of the Interior and the Mayor of Boston on March 17, 1951, the Dorchester Heights Monument and surrounding Thomas Park was designated a National Historic Site. The agreement said that the City of Boston would preserve the site and the Department of the Interior would assist in preservation, if funds were available, and provide a National Historic Site marker. On October 1, 1974, Public Law 93-431 authorized establishment of the Boston National Historical Park, which identified eight sites in Boston, including Dorchester Heights, to be studied for eventual inclusion in the park. On November 10, 1978, Dorchester Heights National Historic Site was added to the Boston National Historical Park through Public Law 95-625, as part of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978. The transfer occurred on September 8, 1980 as part of a boundary change to Boston National Historical Park (General Management Plan, 1974:1).

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is significant under National Register criteria A, B, C, and D. Under Criterion A in the area of military, it is nationally significant for the construction of fortifications in March 1776, and locally significant for the building of the fortifications in May 1776 and again during the War of 1812 (1814). Under Criterion A in the area of community planning and development, the site is also locally significant for the development of Thomas Park, one of the first public parks in Boston. Under Criterion B, the site is nationally significant for its association with General George Washington and his plan to force a military engagement with the British during the Revolutionary War. Under Criterion C in the area of architecture, Dorchester Heights is locally significant for the design and construction of the 100-foot Dorchester Heights Monument Tower designed in 1901 by Boston architects Robert Peabody and John Stearns. Under Criterion C in the area of landscape architecture, the site is also locally significant for the design of Thomas Park. Under Criterion D, the site is nationally significant for the moat from the May 1776 fortifications discovered in 1994. Dorchester Heights is also nationally significant under Criteria Consideration F: Commemorative Properties, for the Dorchester Heights Monument and two smaller monuments.

For purposes of this CLI, and as stated in the "Cultural Landscape Report for Dorchester Heights/Thomas Park" (1993) and the park's "General Management Plan/Environmental Assessment for Dorchester Heights" (1994), there are four periods of significance for the Dorchester Heights National Historic Site. The first period is March 4-17, 1776, a key event in the American Revolution, which included the building of the fortifications from March 4-5 and the evacuation of the British from Boston on March 17. The second period is May 1776 to 1815, which includes the rebuilding of the Revolutionary War fortifications in May 1776 and construction of new fortifications in 1814 during the War of 1812 (the war ended in 1815). The third period is 1847 to 1853, which encompasses the development, design, and construction of Thomas Park. The fourth period is 1877 to 1927, between which years the Dorchester Heights Monument (1901) as well as two smaller monuments (in 1877 and 1927) were constructed to memorialize Revolutionary War events.

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION SUMMARY AND CONDITION

The physical integrity of Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is assessed based on how the site's present conditions compare to those during the periods of significance (March 1776, May 1776 to 1815, 1847 to 1853, 1877 to

1927). Research conducted for this CLI indicates that many of the site's landscape characteristics and features present at the end of the period of significance (1927) are still intact. The glacial drumlin that served as the site of strategic fortifications twice in 1776 and again in 1814, and then transformed into a park in the 1850s, is still present. The 100-foot brick and stone masonry Dorchester Heights Monument tower, built in 1901-1902 to commemorate the site's military history, remains as a visual landmark for the site and neighborhood. While some views to the surrounding neighborhood from the base of the Monument has changed over time, the top of the monument structure still provides full 360-degree views to Boston. Historic views into the site and the tower are also still possible from some of the streets that converge at the site. The configuration of the site's curvilinear paths and lawn panels dotted with trees are essentially unchanged. Other features that remain from the historical period include two smaller commemorative monuments (1876 Centennial and Henry Knox) and a perimeter fence.

Since 1927, a variety of trees have been added including crabapple, cherry, green and white ash, and pin oak, although overall there are fewer trees at the site since the end of the historic period. Major site renovations in 1995-1997 included the installation of the retaining walls, stairs, and ramps to improve accessibility and to stabilize the park's steep hills. Some of these projects rebuilt walls and stairs installed in the 1940s. Other features that have been added since the historical period include the 1982 Allied War Veterans Monument, National Park Service signage, benches, trash receptacles, lighting, irrigation boxes, and utility boxes. Today, Dorchester Heights National Historic Site retains greater overall integrity for its later periods of significance as a park and commemorative site than it does for the Revolutionary War periods.

The Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is considered to be in "fair" condition. In 1997, the park completed a major rehabilitation of the site, including rebuilding retaining walls, repaving paths, and increasing accessibility to the site. Some of the retaining walls, walks, ramps, and stairs have been affected by slope creep, which causes movement of the structures. Some walkways are beginning to show signs of concrete spall, particularly in areas where water collects, and retaining walls and stairs are beginning to shift and separate. The site has also been subjected to human forces, including vandalism on the site, as well as deterioration of elements such as the grass slopes and monuments due to the large number of dogs using the park. Overall, repairs will be needed in the next 3-5 years to prevent further harm to the resources.

Landscape Hierarchy Description:

Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is one of three cultural landscapes within the Boston National Historical Park. The other sites are Bunker Hill Monument and Charlestown Navy Yard.

Landscape Type:

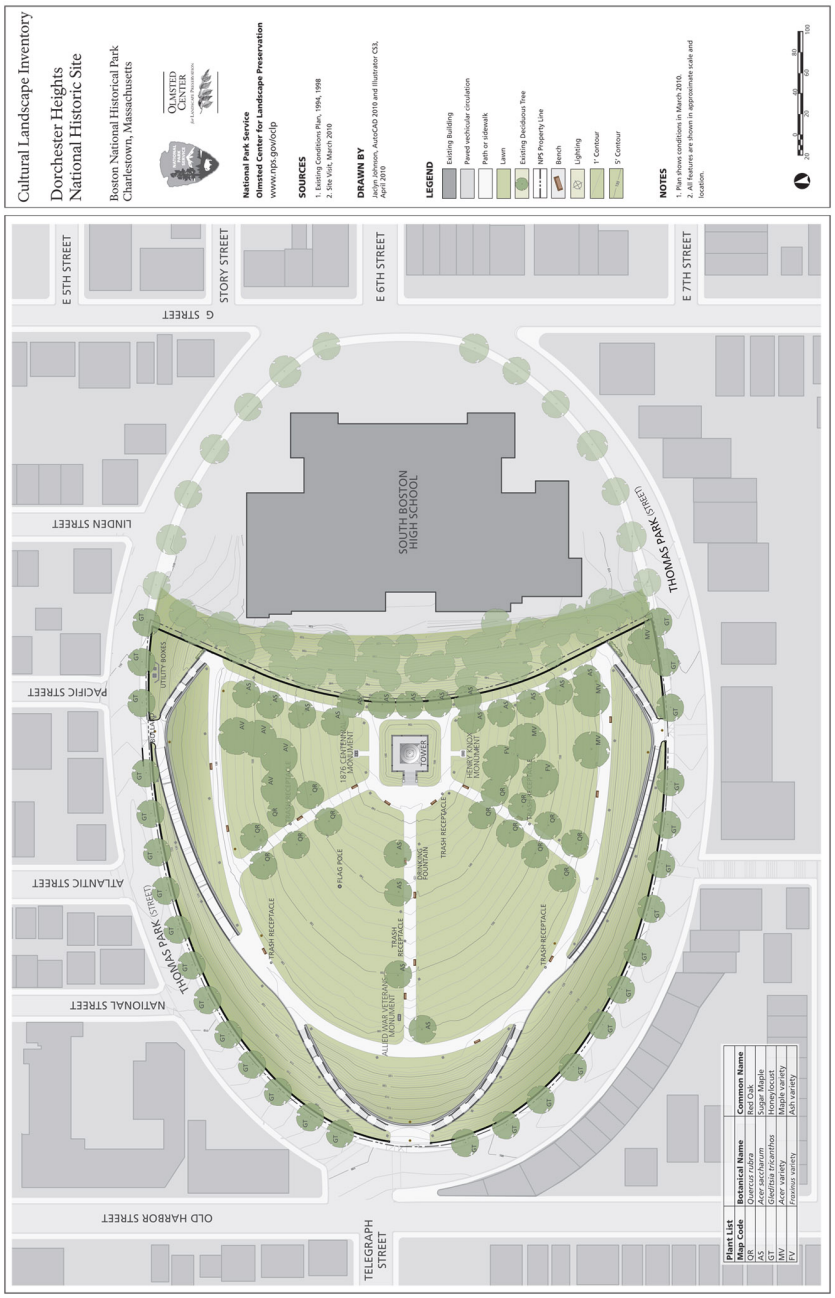
Historic Designed Landscape

Historic Site

Other Names:

Other Name:	Telegraph Hill	**Other Name Type:**	Historic
Other Name:	Dorchester Heights	**Other Name Type:**	Both Current And Historic
Other Name:	Linden Park	**Other Name Type:**	Historic
Other Name:	Thomas Park	**Other Name Type:**	Both Current And Historic

Site Plan



Site plan for Dorchester Heights National Historic Site (Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, 2010).

Concurrence Information

Concurrence Status:

Park Superintendent Concurrence: Yes

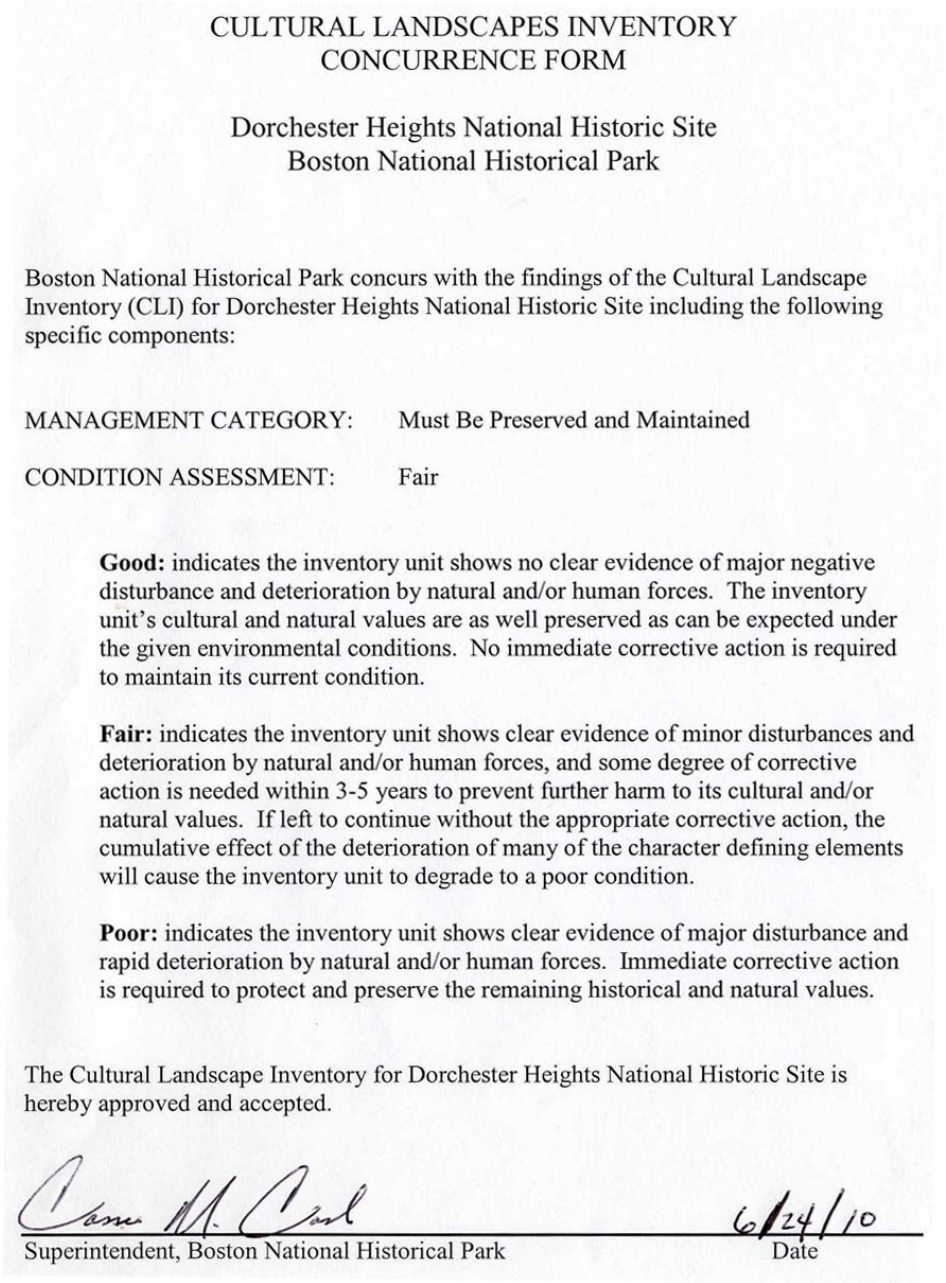
Park Superintendent Date of Concurrence: 06/24/2010

Completion Status Explanatory Narrative:

Field work for this project was undertaken on March 10, 2010 by Jacqui Johnson, Student Conservation Association intern with the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation. The park contact for the Cultural Landscape Inventory is Ruth Raphael, who can be reached at (617-242-5691) or by email at Ruth_Raphael@nps.gov.

Concurrence Graphic Information:

Attachment File Path



CULTURAL LANDSCAPES INVENTORY
CONCURRENCE FORM

Dorchester Heights National Historic Site
Boston National Historical Park

Boston National Historical Park concurs with the findings of the Cultural Landscape Inventory (CLI) for Dorchester Heights National Historic Site including the following specific components:

MANAGEMENT CATEGORY: Must Be Preserved and Maintained

CONDITION ASSESSMENT: Fair

Good: indicates the inventory unit shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbance and deterioration by natural and/or human forces. The inventory unit's cultural and natural values are as well preserved as can be expected under the given environmental conditions. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.

Fair: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and some degree of corrective action is needed within 3-5 years to prevent further harm to its cultural and/or natural values. If left to continue without the appropriate corrective action, the cumulative effect of the deterioration of many of the character defining elements will cause the inventory unit to degrade to a poor condition.

Poor: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of major disturbance and rapid deterioration by natural and/or human forces. Immediate corrective action is required to protect and preserve the remaining historical and natural values.

The Cultural Landscape Inventory for Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is hereby approved and accepted.

Superintendent, Boston National Historical Park — Date 6/24/10

Park concurrence form, June 24, 2010.

topography, the views and vistas, and vegetation. We concur that the remaining resources (granite stair; elements related to circulation, seating, and lighting) are all contributing.

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to comment. Please feel free to contact Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director, MHC, should you have any questions regarding these comments.

Sincerely,

Brona Simon
State Historic Preservation Officer
Executive Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Cc: Dennis Reidenbach, Regional Director, Northeast Region, NPS
Robert Page, Director, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation
Cassius Cash, Superintendent, Boston National Historical Park

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Northeast Region
United States Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

IN REPLY REFER TO:
H30 (NER- HPPC)

JUN 3 0 2010

Ms. Brona Simon
State Historic Preservation Officer
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, MA 02125-3314

Dear Ms. Simon:

Enclosed you will find a copy of the Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI) for the Dorchester Heights National Historic Site landscape located within Boston National Historical Park. We seek to reconfirm our agreement on previously evaluated resources and your concurrence on the status of resources and features identified in this CLI previously unevaluated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The report has been prepared by a team of historical landscape architects with the National Park Service (NPS) Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation. The CLI program and the enclosed report continue the NPS efforts to update our cultural resource inventories.

Through the CLI program, the NPS is currently in the midst of a nationwide effort to inventory its cultural landscapes. The CLI is conducted in accordance with Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended). It is an inventory of baseline information for all historically significant cultural landscapes within the national park system, and it examines multiple landscape features that contribute to the significance of historic properties. The CLI process includes gathering information from existing secondary sources and conducting on-site reconnaissance of the existing landscape. The information collected provides a comprehensive look at the historical development and significance of the landscape, placing it in context of the property's overall significance. For landscapes found potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, the evaluation describes their character-defining features and assesses the landscape's overall historical integrity. It also raises questions about the landscape that need further study.

It is important to note that the CLI reports are not intended as comprehensive inventory reports for any one property, although for some properties they provide fuller documentation than for others. For example, the reports do not include a full architectural description of structures, but document structures as elements of the overall landscape, and similarly documents other

characteristics such as vegetation, spatial organization, and views and vistas. The CLI is one component of the NPS inventory effort that also includes cultural resource inventories for historic structures, archeological sites, ethnographic resources, and museum objects. For example, the NPS List of Classified Structures inventory includes structural features of cultural landscapes, but the CLI takes a more encompassing approach to the properties, inventorying all above-ground features in each park in which the NPS has a legal or mandated interest.

Dorchester Heights National Historic site was designated on March 17, 1951 through a cooperative agreement between the City of Boston and the Department of the Interior under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935. The site is currently included in three separate National Register of Historic Places listings: as "Dorchester Heights National Historic Site" (NRIS #66000050) administratively listed in 1966 but not documented until 1981; as part of the "Boston National Historic Park" in 1974 (NRIS #74002222); and as part of the "Dorchester Heights Historic District" in 2001 (NRIS #01001198).

Dorchester Heights National Historic Site was administratively listed in the National Register on October 15, 1966 and documented on February 23, 1981. The documentation identifies military, community planning, and architecture as areas of significance, and George Washington, Robert Peabody, and John Stearns as significant persons. The periods of significance given on the form are 1700-1799 and 1900, as well as two specific dates, 1776 and 1901. The date 1776 commemorates the fortification of Dorchester Heights by General George Washington and his army, ultimately leading to the evacuation of the British from Boston on March 17, 1776. The 1901 date commemorates the construction of the Dorchester Heights Monument. The 100-foot masonry tower is described as an example of Georgian Colonial Revival architecture, and was designed by the Boston architectural firm of Peabody and Stearns to mark the site of the American fortifications during the Revolutionary War. The documentation also describes the surrounding 5.43 acre Thomas Park as the first parcel of land in South Boston to be set aside by the city solely for public use, and as a reflection of its Victorian design in the configuration and layout of the walks.

Dorchester Heights National Historic Site was added to Boston National Historical Park on November 10, 1978, and through a boundary change on September 8, 1980. In the NRIS database, the period of significance for the park is given as 1750-1849 with specific dates of 1776, 1800, and 1830. The areas of significance are maritime history, politics, architecture, and engineering. However, there is no documentation for this listing.

The Dorchester Heights Historic District, which includes Dorchester Heights National Historic Site, was listed in the National Register with documentation on November 1, 2001. The district, which encompasses approximately 40 acres, is recognized for local significance under Criterion A in the area of military because of its association with the military campaign conducted by George Washington, and in the area of community planning and development for its history as a mid-nineteenth century middle class neighborhood and home to a number of prominent citizens. The district is also recognized for its local significance under Criterion C in the area of

architecture for its "intact survival of properties which reflect vernacular building practices," and its "substantial residences exhibiting some of the most highly individualistic designs as well as more modest houses that represent more standard building types and styles" (National Register 2001,Sec.8:3). The district is also identified as a commemorative property under Criteria Consideration F. The period of significance is 1776 to 1951, with a significant date of 1776. In the documentation, Thomas Park (Dorchester Heights National Historic Site) is described as encompassing around 5.5 acres and is identified as a contributing site, while the Dorchester Heights Monument, gates/fence, Centennial Monument, and Henry Knox Monument are identified as contributing resources.

On January 30, 1995, your office concurred with the National Park Service's list of contributing resources at the site, as part of a List of Classified Structures survey. These resources included the Monument (Tower), Perimeter Fence, Centennial Monument, and Henry Knox Monument. Additionally, your office noted that the period of significance "excludes the period 1800-1899 and should be modified to include nineteenth-century historic components of the property."

In a letter dated March 1, 1995, your office commented on the National Park Service's archeological investigation that resulted in the discovery of the original moat that surrounded the 1776 fort that the Dorchester Heights Monument was built to commemorate. As stated in the letter, "As a unique surviving feature of the Revolutionary War fortification, this discovery is one of the most important archeological discoveries made in the Boston area. The moat feature has sufficient integrity of location and workmanship to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A, B, C, and D."

The enclosed CLI for Dorchester Heights National Historic Site fully evaluates the cultural landscape, particularly the associated landscape characteristics and features, and finds that the Dorchester Heights National Historic Site landscape retains integrity to the areas of military, community development and planning, commemorative landscape, architecture, landscape architecture, and archeology. As noted previously, many of the property's features compiled on the attached lists have already been listed, or have determined to be eligible for listing, on the National Register. Based on the findings of the CLI, the NPS is proposing four periods of significance: March 1776 for the building of fortifications and the evacuation of the British; May 1776-1815 for the rebuilding of the Revolutionary War fortifications in 1776 and construction of new fortifications in 1814 during the War of 1812 (the war ended in 1815); 1847-1853 for the development, design, and construction of Thomas Park; and 1877-1927 for construction of the Dorchester Heights Monument (1901) and two smaller monuments (in 1877 and 1927) to memorialize Revolutionary War events. In addition, the CLI identifies ten additional characteristics and features related to topography, views and vistas, vegetation, circulation, and buildings and structures that also contribute to the significance and historic character of Dorchester Heights National Historic Site.

We call your particular attention to the Landscape Description, National Register Information and the Statement of Significance, and Analysis and Evaluation Summary in the enclosed CLI.

Circulation
- Stairs
- Ramps

Buildings and Structures
- Concrete Retaining Walls

Small-scale Features
- Drinking Fountain
- Allied War Veterans Monument
- Benches
- Wrought-Iron Fence between Monument and School
- Bollard
- NPS Signs
- Moakley Memorial Plaque
- Concrete Panels
- Trash Receptacles

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

September 27, 2010

Mr. Jeff Killion
CLI Coordinator
National Park Service
Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation
15 State Street, 6th Floor
Boston, MA 02109

RE: Cultural Landscapes Inventory (CLI), Dorchester Heights National Historic Site and Bunker Hill Monument, Boston

Dear Mr. Killion:

I am writing in response to your letter seeking Massachusetts Historical Commission concurrence with National Park Service findings of the period of significance and the status—contributing or noncontributing—for resources identified in the CLIs for the Dorchester Heights National Historic Site and Bunker Hill Monument, both located within the Boston National Historical Park. The following is a summation of our opinions, offered to assist in compliance with Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended).

Regarding Dorchester Heights:
We concur with the areas of significance as defined in the CLI. However, we recommend that the list of contributing features should include archaeological features.

We have questions regarding the periods of significance and the contributing and noncontributing features as follows:

The CLI defines four periods of significance. However, it may be more appropriate to have a continuum beginning in 1776, rather than separate periods, and to have that period extend past 1927 (the date of the installation of the Knox monument) up to the 50-year cutoff. Page 17 of the CLI notes that the surrounding area contributes to the significance of the NHS and that a number of the residential buildings were erected both during the periods of significance and between 1850 (Thomas Park) and 1873, which would seem to support a continuous period of significance. Also, as noted in the CLI, the park and site have played an important role in the neighborhood past 1927, which would support a 50-year cutoff.

220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
(617) 727-8470 • Fax: (617) 727-5128
www.state.ma.us/sec/mhc

SHPO concurrence letter, September 27, 2010 (9 pages).

On January 30, 1995, MHC concurred with the National Park Service's list of contributing resources at the site as part of the List of Classified Structures. We continue to concur with that list, while we also recommend adding the Thomas Park itself as a contributing site. Note that if the period of significance were to be extended as suggested above, a number of buildings, structures and objects presently considered noncontributing would become contributing.

The CLI adds ten additional contributing resources. Several of these would not be considered contributing in terms of the National Register guidelines, including topography, the views and vistas, and vegetation.

The catch basins, as described in the CLI on pp. 57-58, reflect several stages of construction. They appear on the 1913 plan, but additional ones appear to have been installed in 1995; it is not clear whether the historic catch basins were removed or replaced.

On page 62, line one of Archaeology section, instead of "footing for the earthen, star-shaped fort…," we recommend "evidence of the earthern, star-shaped fort…" Also, on page 63, line one, we suggest "1776 stone bridge," not "masonry."

Also, on page 71, note that the caption does not match the map shown.

Regarding Bunker Hill Monument:
On January 30, 1995, MHC concurred with the List of Classified Structures' list of contributing resources within a period of significance that then extended to 1902. We would recommend that the site itself be counted as contributing.

The present CLI proposes to extend the period of significance to 1947, when major site improvements were completed by the MDC. We note that it would be appropriate to extend the period of significance to 1960, the 50-year cut off. Extending the period of significance would thus include programs for maintenance and rehabilitation introduced by the MDC in the 1950s.

While we do not disagree that the period of significance should begin in 1775, we have concerns regarding the discussion of the battleground landscape's integrity: as noted in the CLI on page 9—"the cultural landscape no longer retains integrity of the 18th century battleground landscape..." and pp. 22, 54, 55, and 58, where it is also noted that the significance of archaeological resources associated with the battlefield is not part of the CLI. If the cultural landscape no longer retains sufficient integrity to convey the 18th century battleground landscape, or if assessment of archaeological resources would be necessary to confirm that integrity, perhaps the wording of these statements could be rephrased to support the opening of the period of significance—page 53, for instance, does state that the landscape retains integrity to 1775.

The CLI lists 10 additional contributing resources. Several of these would not be considered contributing in terms of the National Register guidelines, including

Based on the CLI, we seek your concurrence on the following:

- The periods of significance for the cultural landscape are March 1776, May 1776-1815, 1847-1853, and 1877-1927.
- The areas of significance for the cultural landscape are military, community development and planning, commemorative landscape, architecture, landscape architecture, and archeology.
- The categorization of contributing and non-contributing characteristics and features (see attached list).

If you concur with these findings, we ask that you please sign on the space provided and return this letter to Jeff Killion, CLI Coordinator (Address: National Park Service, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, 15 State Street, 6th Floor, Boston, MA 02109). We would appreciate your response at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your attention to this inventory. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mr. Killion at 617-223-5053.

Sincerely,

Dennis R. Reidenbach
Regional Director
Northeast Region

Enclosure

cc:
Superintendent, Boston National Historical Park

I concur with the National Park Service categorization of the Dorchester Heights National Historic Site landscape resources and features at Boston National Historical Park, as contributing and non-contributing.

_____ _____
Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Officer Date

NPS Cultural Landscapes Inventory – Dorchester Heights
Boston National Historical Park
List of Contributing and Non-Contributing Landscape Features
May 2010

Contributing Landscape Characteristics & Associated Features

The following landscape characteristics and associated features contribute to the property's historic character, though not all are considered countable resources according to the National Register of Historic Places. Those marked with an (*) are described in the "Dorchester Heights National Historic Site" National Register documentation from February 23, 1981. Those marked with an (#) are described in the "Dorchester Heights Historic District" National Register documentation from November 1, 2001. Those marked with a (+) were identified as contributing resources by the Massachusetts Historical Commission on January 30, 1995.

Topography
Slopes

Views and Vistas
Views from Thomas Park
Views from Top of the Dorchester Heights Monument
Views from Surrounding Streets into Site

Vegetation
Pre-1927 Shade Trees (on 1913 Olmsted Plan)
Upper Lawn
Grass Slopes

Circulation
Walks

Buildings and Structures
* # + Dorchester Heights Monument (Tower)
Catch Basins

Small-scale Features
+ 1876 Centennial Monument
+ Henry Knox Monument
* + Perimeter Fence
Flagpole

Non-Contributing Landscape Characteristics & Associated Features
Vegetation
Post-1927 Shade Trees
Shrubs

Cultural Landscapes Inventory
CLI Update Certification Form
2025

Boston National Historical Park
Bunker Hill Monument, Charlestown Navy Yard, Dorchester Heights NHS

Boston National Historical Park concurs with the updates for the following CLIs, including:

CONDITION ASSESSMENT: Good – Bunker Hill Monument
Good – Charlestown Navy Yard
Good – Dorchester Heights National Historic Site

Good: indicates the inventory unit shows no clear evidence of major negative disturbance and deterioration by natural and/or human forces. The inventory unit's cultural and natural values are as well preserved as can be expected under the given environmental conditions. No immediate corrective action is required to maintain its current condition.

Fair: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of minor disturbances and deterioration by natural and/or human forces, and some degree of corrective action is needed within 3-5 years to prevent further harm to its cultural and/or natural values. If left to continue without the appropriate corrective action, the cumulative effect of the deterioration of many of the character defining elements, will cause the inventory unit to degrade to a poor condition.

Poor: indicates the inventory unit shows clear evidence of major disturbance and rapid deterioration by natural and/or human forces. Immediate corrective action is required to protect and preserve the remaining historical and natural values.

The CLI Updates at Boston National Historical Park are hereby approved and accepted.

SIMONE MONTELEONE Digitally signed by SIMONE MONTELEONE
Date: 2025.06.11 16:16:34 -04'00'
Superintendent, Boston National Historical Park Date

Park concurrence form, June 11, 2025.

Revision:

Revised By	Type of Revision	Revision Date	Revision Narrative
Jeff Killion	CLI Update	06/11/2025	Three levels of effort have been developed for CLI Updates: A, B, and C. Level C is limited to a condition reassessment of the landscape; Level B includes C and is a targeted update of select data fields; Level A includes C and is a comprehensive update of all data fields. This 2025 update to the Dorchester Heights National Historic Site CLI has been conducted at a Level C effort. See Landscape Documents in CRIS-CL for correspondences with park.

Geographic Information

State and County:

State	County
Massachusetts	Suffolk County

Size (Acres): 5.43

Land Tract Number(s)

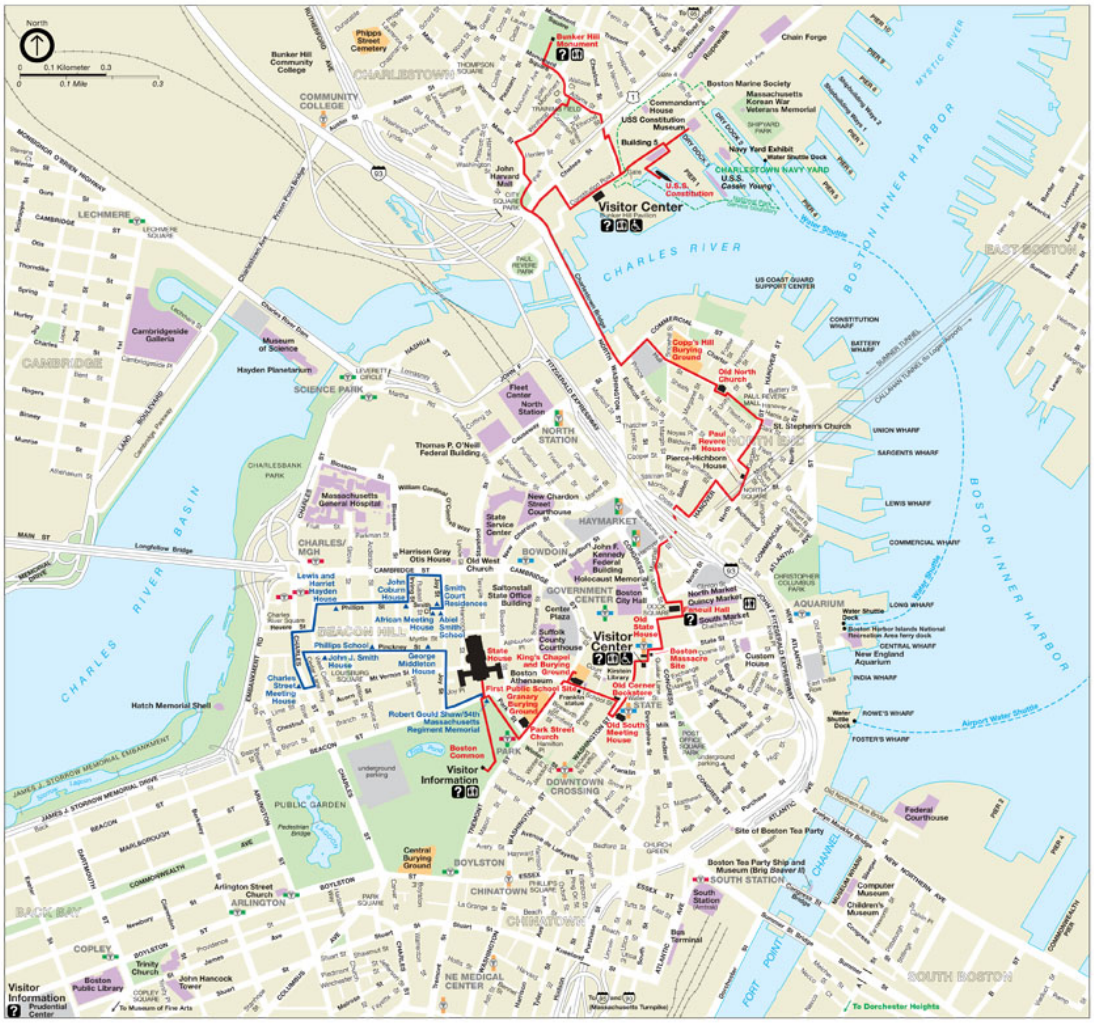
Boundary Description:

Dorchester Heights National Historic Site occupies the top of Telegraph Hill in South Boston and includes the Dorchester Heights Monument and the surrounding 5.43-acre Thomas Park parcel. Today the landscape is set in a dense residential area, located south of downtown Boston. The park occupies the western two-thirds of the elliptical-shaped area created by the surrounding Thomas Park Street. The eastern third of the ovular area is occupied by the South Boston High School and not part of the Boston National Historical Park.

Boundary Coordinates

Source	Type of Point	Latitude	Longitude	Narrative
USGS Map 1:24,000	Point	-71.0462682024096	42.3307693730905	

Location Map:



Map of Boston National Historical Park. Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is just to the southeast (Harpers Ferry Center, National Park Service).



Map of Boston showing Dorchester Heights National Historic Site, at lower right (Bing Maps).

Regional Landscape Contexts:

Type of Context: Physiographic

Description:

Dorchester Heights National Historic Site sits at the top of Telegraph Hill, a drumlin formed by glacial action, which trends in an east-west direction, and has an elevation of 150 feet above sea level. It is one of many drumlins in the Boston area that are the remnants of the Wisconsin continental ice sheet during the Pleistocene Era.

Type of Context: Cultural

Description:

The site occupies approximately 5.43 acres at the top of Telegraph Hill. Prior to the fortifications of March 1776, the site had been used for agriculture, pasturage, and orchards. Today, the site is part of the Dorchester Heights Historic District, primarily a residential neighborhood. Small businesses are located within the residential core of South Boston along Broadway to the north and Andrew Square to the west, while a large industrial area surrounds this residential area from west to northeast. An open space/recreation area bounds the residential area from Boston Harbor to the east and Old Harbor to the south. A major transportation corridor located approximately one mile west of the site acts as a divider of Boston and South Boston.

Type of Context: Political

Description:

Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is situated in South Boston, a neighborhood of the City of Boston, Massachusetts and located south of downtown Boston on a peninsula extending eastward between Boston Harbor and the Old Harbor. The land that encompasses the site was annexed to the City of Boston in 1804, and renamed South Boston. The site became a National Historic Site in 1951, and its management was shared by the city and National Park Service until 1980 when ownership of the monument and park was officially conveyed to the United States Government.

Management Information

General Management Information

Management Category: Must be Preserved and Maintained

Management Category Date: 06/24/2010

Management Category Explanatory Narrative:

Dorchester Heights National Historic Site meets the criteria for “Must be Preserved and Maintained” as it is related to the legislated significance of the Boston National Historical Park. The site was designated a National Historic Site in 1951, but through a cooperative agreement remained under City of Boston ownership and management. Boston National Historical Park was established in 1974, and Dorchester Heights was identified as one of eight sites for eventual inclusion in the park. It was added to the park in 1980.

Management Agreements:

Type of Agreement:

Management Agreement Expiration Date:

Management Agreement Explanatory Narrative:

Legal Interests:

Type of Interest: Fee Simple

Narrative:

Located in managed wilderness?: Unknown

Adjacent Lands Information

Do Adjacent Lands Contribute? Yes

Adjacent Lands Narrative:

Adjacent lands do contribute to the site's significance because of the outward views of Boston and its harbor that were crucial in the defense of Dorchester Heights and in the erection of fortifications here in March 1776, May 1776, and during the War of 1812. These views were also important in selecting the site as one of Boston's first public parks in the early 1850s. Though some sightlines are obstructed by either the surrounding buildings or vegetation, as well as significant land fill, a majority of these views are intact today. The top of the monument also provides panoramic views of the surrounding area.

The residential areas that comprised the Dorchester Heights Historic District, which surrounds the site, also contribute to the site's significance. Many of the homes were built and the streets set out beginning in 1850, which is also the time when Thomas Park was developed, to around 1873.

National Register Information

National Register of Historic Places

Documentation Status: Entered Inadequately Documented

Documentation Narrative Description:

Dorchester Heights National Historic site was designated on March 17, 1951 through a cooperative agreement between the City of Boston and the Department of the Interior under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935. The site is currently included in three separate National Register of Historic Places listings: as “Dorchester Heights National Historic Site” (NRIS #66000050) administratively listed in 1966 but not documented until 1981; as part of the “Boston National Historic Park” in 1974 (NRIS #74002222); and as part of the “Dorchester Heights Historic District” in 2001 (NRIS #01001198).

Dorchester Heights National Historic Site was administratively listed in the National Register on October 15, 1966 and documented on February 23, 1981. The documentation identifies military, community planning, and architecture as areas of significance, and George Washington, Robert Peabody, and John Stearns as significant persons. The periods of significance given on the form are ‘1700-1799’ and ‘1900-’ as well as two specific dates, 1776 and 1901. The date 1776 commemorates the fortification of Dorchester Heights by General George Washington and his army, ultimately leading to the evacuation of the British from Boston on March 17, 1776. The 1901 date commemorates the construction of the Dorchester Heights Monument. The 100-foot masonry tower is described as an example of Georgian Colonial Revival architecture, and was designed by the Boston architectural firm of Peabody and Stearns to mark the site of the American fortifications during the Revolutionary War. The documentation also describes the surrounding 5.43 acre Thomas Park as the first parcel of land in South Boston to be set aside by the city solely for public use, and as a reflection of its Victorian design in the configuration and layout of the walks.

Dorchester Heights National Historic Site was added to Boston National Historical Park on November 10, 1978, and through a boundary change on September 8, 1980. In the NRIS database, the period of significance for the park is given as 1750-1849 with specific dates of 1776, 1800, and 1830. The areas of significance are maritime history, politics, architecture, and engineering. However, there is no documentation for this listing.

The Dorchester Heights Historic District, which includes Dorchester Heights National Historic Site, was listed in the National Register with documentation on November 1, 2001. The district, which encompasses approximately 40 acres, is recognized for local significance under Criterion A in the area of military because of its association with the military campaign conducted by George Washington, and in the area of community planning and development for its history as a mid-nineteenth century middle class neighborhood and home to a number of prominent citizens. The district is also recognized for its local significance under Criterion C in the area of architecture for its “intact survival of properties which reflect vernacular building practices,” and its “substantial residences exhibiting some of the most highly individualistic designs as well as more modest houses that represent more standard building types and styles” (National Register 2001,Sec.8:3). The district is also identified as a commemorative property under Criteria Consideration F. The period of significance is 1776 to 1951, with a significant date of 1776. In the documentation, Thomas Park (Dorchester Heights National Historic Site) is described as encompassing around 5.5 acres and is identified as a contributing site, while the Dorchester Heights Monument, gates/fence, Centennial Monument, and Henry Knox Monument are identified as contributing resources.

On January 30, 1995, the Massachusetts Historical Commission concurred with the National Park Service’s list of contributing resources at the site, as part of a List of Classified Structures survey. These resources included the Monument (Tower), Perimeter Fence, Centennial Monument, and Henry Knox Monument. Additionally, the Massachusetts Historical Commission noted that the period of significance “excludes the period 1800-1899 and should be modified to include nineteenth-century historic components

of the property."

In a letter dated March 1, 1995, the Massachusetts Historical Commission commented on the National Park Service's archeological investigation that resulted in the discovery of the original moat that surrounded the 1776 fort that the Dorchester Heights Monument was built to commemorate. As stated in the letter, "As a unique surviving feature of the Revolutionary War fortification, this discovery is one of the most important archeological discoveries made in the Boston area. The moat feature has sufficient integrity of location and workmanship to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A, B, C, and D."

For purposes of this CLI, the status of the National Register listing and documentation for the Dorchester Heights National Historic Site landscape is "Entered-Inadequately Documented." The currently documented periods and areas of significance do not adequately encompass all of the site's historic resources.

Eligibility: Eligible -- SHPO Consensus Determination

Concurrence Eligibility Date: 09/27/2010

Concurrence Narrative:

Comments from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (SHPO) were received on September 27, 2010. Their comments and responses from OCLP are as follows:

--The SHPO concurred on the areas of significance, but recommended that archeological features should be included as contributing features. OCLP: Evaluation of archeological features is beyond the scope of the CLI.
--The SHPO recommended that the period of significance be a continuum rather than as four separate periods, and to have it extend past 1927 up to the 50-year cutoff. OCLP: The SHPO's rationale is that the surrounding area was developed during the periods of significance and between 1850 and 1873. While this is true, these areas are beyond the study boundaries of the CLI, are not owned by the NPS, and therefore cannot be evaluated in the CLI. National Register documentation for the Dorchester Heights Historic District lists many of the surrounding features as contributing resources.
--The SHPO recommended adding Thomas Park as a contributing site. OCLP: The National Register documentation for the Dorchester Heights Historic District lists Thomas Park as a contributing site.
--The SHPO questioned which historic catch basins were removed or replaced. OCLP: This has been clarified in the text.
--Editorial comments regarding the descriptions of archeological features. OCLP: These have been addressed in the text.

Significance Level: National

Contributing: Individual

Classification: Site

Statement of Significance for National Register of Historic Places:

Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is significant under National Register criteria A, B, C, and D. Under Criterion A in the area of military, it is nationally significant for the construction of fortifications in March 1776, and locally significant for the building of the fortifications in May 1776 and again during the War of 1812 (1814). Under Criterion A in the area of community planning and development, the site is

also locally significant for the development of Thomas Park, one of the first public parks in Boston. Under Criterion B, the site is nationally significant for its association with General George Washington and his plan to force a military engagement with the British during the Revolutionary War. Under Criterion C in the area of architecture, Dorchester Heights is locally significant for the design and construction of the 100-foot Dorchester Heights Monument Tower designed in 1901 by Boston architects Robert Peabody and John Stearns. Under Criterion C in the area of landscape architecture, the site is also locally significant for the design of Thomas Park. Under Criterion D, the site is nationally significant for the original May 1776 moat discovered in 1994. Dorchester Heights is also nationally significant under Criteria Consideration F: Commemorative Properties, for the Dorchester Heights Monument and two smaller monuments.

For purposes of this CLI, and as stated in the "Cultural Landscape Report for Dorchester Heights/Thomas Park" (1993) and the park's "General Management Plan/Environmental Assessment for Dorchester Heights" (1994), there are four periods of significance for the Dorchester Heights National Historic Site. The first period is March 4-17, 1776, a key event in the American Revolution, which included the building of the fortifications from March 4-5 and the evacuation of the British from Boston on March 17. The second period is May 1776 to 1815, which includes the construction of the star-shaped fortification in May 1776 and reconstruction of those fortifications in 1814 during the War of 1812 (the war ended in 1815). The third period is 1847 to 1853, which encompasses the development, design, and construction of Thomas Park. The fourth period is 1877 to 1927, between which years the Dorchester Heights Monument (1901) as well as two smaller monuments (in 1877 and 1927) were constructed to memorialize Revolutionary War events.

CRITERION A

Military:
Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is significant under Criterion A for its association with the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Regarding events in March 1776:
"Dorchester Heights National Historic Site commemorates the fortification by General Washington and his army which forced the British evacuation of Boston on March 17, 1776. Realizing that possession of this piece of high ground (which provided a commanding view of Boston, Charlestown, and the Boston Harbor) would render untenable continued British occupation of Boston, Washington first occupied and fortified the hill during the night of March 4, 1776. Faced by an American force that eventually numbered 4,000, and was supported by 59 cannons brought down from Fort Ticonderoga, the British General William Howe determined that further occupation of the city was imprudent and judiciously removed his army of 11,000 men from Boston." (National Register 1981,Sec.8:1)

In May 1776, the fortifications were rebuilt in the form of a star-shaped fort under the direction of Colonel Richard Gridley as a precaution against a future British attack. The site is also significant for the rebuilding of fortifications in 1814 in preparation for defense in the War of 1812. Although no battles were fought in Boston in the War of 1812, the fortifications at Dorchester Heights were re-manned and modified as a defensive measure.

Community Planning and Development:
Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is significant under Criterion A for the construction of the South Boston Reservoir (replaced in 1899 by the South Boston High School) and of Thomas Park on Telegraph Hill. It is also associated with two related but somewhat distinct larger pattems of events: the sanitary reform movement (reservoir and park) and the small park movement (park) during the period 1847 to 1853.

Although it began as land set aside as a memorial of its role in the Revolutionary War, Thomas Park was "the first parcel of land in South Boston set aside by the city solely for public purposes" (National Register 1981, Sec.8). In addition to developing as an open, recreational space for the people of South Boston, the placement of the reservoir on the site provided fresh drinking water, improving sanitary conditions for the growing community, and providing precedent for parks aiming to alleviate social problems. The site also became a focal point of a larger "mid-nineteenth century middle class neighborhood which was home to a number of prominent industrialists, businessmen, builder/developers, and seafarers" (National Register 2001, Sec.8:3).

CRITERION B

General George Washington:
Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is significant under Criterion B for its association with General George Washington. The fortification by General Washington and his army forced the British evacuation of Boston on March 17, 1776. This event was the first great American victory of the Revolutionary War "and served to inspire hope and confidence in the leadership and capabilities of the Continental Army" (National Register 1981, Sec.8).

CRITERION C

Landscape Architecture:
Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is significant under Criterion C for the design of Thomas Park, one of the first parks in Boston. Like other small parks built in the mid-nineteenth century, the design is relatively simple and features a symmetrical layout, a central focal point feature, plantings limited mostly to trees, and iron fencing. Though there are no plans of the original 1850s design, the current configuration of Thomas Park embodies these characteristics and is almost identical to the layout shown in a local street map from the 1850s and in a 1874 atlas of the South Boston area by G.M Hopkins. According to the 1981 National Register documentation, Thomas Park "continues to reflect its original Victorian design in the basic configuration and layout of its walks" (National Register 1981, Sec.8).

When built in the 1850s, around two-thirds of the elliptical-shaped parcel atop Telegraph Hill was devoted to the park, defined by symmetrical, curving paths that encircled the site or converged upon the park's focal point, a flagpole placed at the top of the hill. The remaining one-third of the parcel was a reservoir, which was removed for the construction of a high school in 1899. In 1901-1902, the flagpole was replaced with the 100-foot tall Dorchester Heights Monument. Despite the substantially different scale of this new focal point, however, the park's overall configuration and layout of walks did not change, and by the late 1920s featured lawns dotted with large shade trees. Beginning in the 1940s, several stairs and retaining walls were built, but they have not impacted the park's overall design.

Today, the lower section of the site is quite steep, rising around thirty feet from street level to the monument at its eastern end. From street level, the park and monument may be reached by any one of four stairways and two ramps, which lead an elliptical walkway that marks the transition to the more gentle slopes that characterize the site's upper section. A central access path running east-west to the monument and four additional paths connect this walk to the four corners of the monument. The monument itself is surrounded by a walkway, steps, and iron fencing. Retaining walls and iron fencing also define the perimeter of the park. Lawn panels are the dominate landscape feature, dotted with some trees and shrubs. Other smaller monuments, lights, benches, flagpole, and trash cans are found proximate to the walkways (National Register 2001, Sec.7:4).

Architecture:
Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is significant in the area of architecture for the Dorchester Heights Monument, built in 1901-1902.
"The Dorchester Heights Monument, a 100-foot tower designed by the Boston firm of Peabody & Stearns and dedicated in 1902, marks this site where the American fortifications were constructed. While the tower constitutes a monument to Revolutionary War events, it also stands in its own right as a monument of Georgian Colonial Revival Architecture; a style inspired by nationalistic sentiment and used to recall specific patriotic landmarks." (National Register 1981,Sec.8)

Documentation regarding the height of the tower varies from 100-115 feet. According to the National Register documentation, Dorchester Heights Monument:
"…is designed in the form of a Colonial-era multi-stage meetinghouse spire. Faced with Georgia marble, the monument is set back at the eastern end of the elliptical green space known as Thomas Park. The Dorchester Heights Monument is the most conspicuous architectural element in South Boston and is visible from many locations in the Boston/Dorchester area. The monument commands unobstructed views of the Boston skyline to the north, and Columbia Point, separated from South Boston by Old Harbor, to the south." (National Register 2001, Sec.7:1)

Peabody & Stearns was one of Boston's most prominent architectural firms:
"Robert Swain Peabody and John G. Stearns were pioneers in the study and design of this style (especially in the form of towers), and Peabody, from the first, was acknowledged as its leading exponent. Several additional Peabody designed towers still mark the Boston skyline." (National Register 1981,Sec.8).

Peabody & Stearns created several of Boston's landmark buildings, including the Custom House Tower (1909-1911). Following architect H. H. Richardson's death in 1886, many considered Peabody & Stearns as Boston's leading architectural design firm, both for the number and the quality of its designs, and for its role as a training ground for young architects.

CRITERION D

On March 1, 1995, the Massachusetts Historical Commission determined that the discovery of the 1776 Revolutionary War fort's moat feature in archeological investigations was eligible under criteria A, B, C, and D. As discussed in the 1993 CLR, the site may have additional significance under Criterion D because it could yield information about the fortifications built on the night of March 4-5, 1776, the rebuilt fortifications of May 1776, and the fortifications of 1814. However, such determination of significance is beyond the scope of this CLI (CLR 1993:170).

CRITERIA CONSIDERATION F

Dorchester Heights National Historic Site meets Criteria Consideration F as a commemorative site because of memorials that have been constructed there to commemorate the site's Revolutionary War history: the 1876 Centennial Monument, the Dorchester Heights Monument Tower (1901), and the Henry Knox Monument (1927). Criteria Consideration F is noted in National Register documentation for Dorchester Heights National Historic Site" (NRIS #66000050) and "Dorchester Heights Historic District" (NRIS #01001198).

National Register Significance Criteria:

A - Associated with events significant to broad patterns of our history

B - Associated with lives of persons significant in our past

C - Embodies distinctive construction, work of master, or high artistic values

D - Has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history

National Register Criteria Consideration:

F -- A commemorative property

National Register Periods of Significance (with Historic Context Themes):

Time Period: CE 1776 - CE 1776

Historic Context Theme	Subtheme	Facet	Other Facet
Shaping the Political Landscape	The American Revolution	War in the North	

Time Period: CE 1776 - CE 1815

Historic Context Theme	Subtheme	Facet	Other Facet
Shaping the Political Landscape	Political and Military Affairs 1783-1860	War Of 1812, 1812-1815	
Shaping the Political Landscape	The American Revolution	War in the North	

Time Period: CE 1847 - CE 1853

Historic Context Theme	Subtheme	Facet	Other Facet
Expressing Cultural Values	Landscape Architecture	Urban Planning In The Nineteenth Century	

Time Period: CE 1877 - CE 1927

Historic Context Theme	Subtheme	Facet	Other Facet
Expressing Cultural Values	Architecture	Period Revivals (1870-1940)	
Transforming the Environment	Historic Preservation	Formative Years, 1796-1858: The Destruction Of Green Springs To The Saving Of Mount Vernon And The Hasbrouck House, Patriotism And Preservation	

Area of Significance:

Area of Significance Category: Architecture

Area of Significance Subcategory:

Explanatory Narrative:

Area of Significance Category: Community Planning and Development

Area of Significance Subcategory:

Explanatory Narrative:

Area of Significance Category: Landscape Architecture

Area of Significance Subcategory:

Explanatory Narrative:

Area of Significance Category: Military

Area of Significance Subcategory:

Explanatory Narrative:

Area of Significance Category: Archeology

Area of Significance Subcategory: Historic-Non-Aboriginal

Explanatory Narrative:

NRIS Information:

NRIS ID: 74002222

Primary Certification Date: 10/26/1974

State Register Documentation:

National Historic Landmarks:

National Historic Landmark? No

Theme:

Contributing:

NHL ID:

NHL URL:

Date:

Statement of Significance for National Historic Landmark:

World Heritage Site:

World Heritage Site? No

Category:

WHS ID:

WHS URL:

Date:

Is Resource within a designated National Natural Landscape: No

Chronology and Physical History

Chronology:

Year	Event	Major Event Narrative
CE 1630	Inhabited	The “Mary and John” arrives in Boston Harbor, carrying 140 passengers who name the site Dorchester.
CE 1634	Built	A fort is constructed on Castle Island just off the shore of the peninsula.
CE 1635	Established	A permanent settlement is established further inland by Reverend Richard Mather.
CE 1775	Abandoned	The dozen or so families living on the Dorchester Neck move to Dorchester.
CE 1776	Abandoned	On February 3, 1776, the British army sends a reconnoitering force to the Neck, burning the vacant houses.
CE 1776	Planned	Colonel Rufus Putnam sends General Washington a letter suggesting methods for securing Dorchester Heights.
CE 1776	Built	The Continental Army constructs structures to hold fascines, stones, and dirt (known as a ‘chandelier’), which would provide protection from enemy fire and allow them to hold Dorchester Heights.
CE 1776	Military Operation	On the nights of March 2 and 3, 1776, the Continental Army fires on the British troops, spurring return fire on their camp in Cambridge.
CE 1776	Built	On the night of March 4, 1776, General John Thomas leads a group of 1,200 men to Dorchester Heights, where they set up the chandelier structures, creating a continuous line of fortifications across the two hills that comprised Dorchester Heights.
CE 1776	Military Operation	A storm keeps the British from attacking Dorchester Heights from their location at Castle William.
CE 1776	Built	On March 9, 1776, Washington directs that an additional battery be built on Nook’s Hill. Fire from the British results in the deaths of four men, delaying the completion until March 16.
CE 1776	Military Operation	On March 17, 1776, the British forces evacuate Boston.
CE 1776	Built	Fortifications at Dorchester Heights continue as a part of a larger defensive system in and around the Boston Harbor.
CE 1776	Built	In December 1776, Colonel Richard Gridley sends Washington the plans of seven new or replaced forts in Boston, including two plans for a hexagonal fort on the first hill in Dorchester.
CE 1794	Planned	Henry Knox allocates $30,000 to Massachusetts for improved fortifications. However, since the proposed site, Castle William, was occupied as a state prison, the funds went elsewhere.
CE 1804	Land Transfer	Dorchester Neck is annexed to Boston and renamed South Boston. Streets are laid out by Mather Withington.

Year	Event	Major Event Narrative
CE 1814	Built	As a reaction to the War of 1812, the Boston Selectmen initiate a local effort to rebuild the fortifications on Dorchester Heights.
CE 1842	Planned	Early plan done by A. Wadsworth shows the prospective locations for a reservoir, park, and encircling street.
CE 1847	Planned	Second early plan is completed, showing the reservoir as a half-doughnut shape, and includes the outlines for the 1814 fort.
CE 1847 - 1855	Planned	An unlabelled, undated, and unsigned third plan for the park is done. It is believed to be a survey, as it outlines the internal layout of park, that is nearly identical to the path system shown in the 1874-1876 Hopkins Atlas.
CE 1849	Built	The City spends $54,315.62 on land and construction for the reservoir. The public opening of South Boston Reservoir occurs on Nov. 20, 1849.
CE 1850	Planned	Stephen Tucker, Superintendent of Public Lands, prepares a plan for Thomas Park in Dorchester Heights, with the intent of creating panoramic views from the site.
CE 1852	Built	Major expenses for the park include installation of an iron fence with stone work, materials for grading and sodding, and Linden trees.
CE 1852	Planned	Discussion begins about a monument for the park, which would double as a dwelling for the park overseer.
CE 1852	Planned	Survey entitled “Map of Boston and Immediate Neighborhood” by H. McIntyre shows Dorchester Heights
CE 1853 - 1854	Built	Main construction on the park is completed, including grading and reseeding.
CE 1855	Built	The wooden fence around the reservoir part of the park is replaced by a wrought iron fence.
CE 1856 - 1878	Built	Refurbishing the site occurs, introducing new benches, trees, and concrete walks.
CE 1872	Removed	The South Boston Reservoir goes out of service on July 15, 1872, but is kept partially full in case of fires.
CE 1876 - 1877	Built	The Centennial Monument is placed on the western portion of the site as a centenary marker commemorating Henry Knox’s role in the evacuation of the British from Boston is placed on the site.
CE 1881	Built	Due to poor condition, the iron fence around the park is removed. For the first, and only, time, flowerbeds are introduced into the park.
CE 1889 - 1890	Damaged	Poor conditions noted at the park include worn grass from lawn games, destruction of the grasses banks and settees, along with inadequate police protection for Thomas Park.
CE 1899	Removed	After going out of service in 1872, the reservoir is removed in 1899.
CE 1899	Built	The South Boston High School is constructed on the site where the reservoir was previously located.

Year	Event	Major Event Narrative
CE 1901 - 1902	Built	The Monument Tower, designed by Boston architects Peabody and Stearns, is built as a monument to the Revolutionary war strategy that lead to the evacuation of the British from Boston.
CE 1901	Built	The iron fence around the perimeter of the site is re-introduced.
CE 1905	Built	New sewer pipe is installed on Thomas Street which connects to the catch basin on site.
CE 1906	Built	Fence around the base of the Monument is added.
CE 1910 - 1911	Damaged	The Monument tower appears to be in bad condition and original architects Peabody and Stearns are called in to examine its condition. They state that it is nothing more than weathering caused by the elements.
CE 1913	Planned	The park is surveyed by the Olmsted Brothers, showing the same path configuration as the 1874 plan, but for the first time, shows the contours of the site. Identifications on the site include trees, sixteen gas lights, twenty-four benches, catchbasins, and a fountain.
CE 1927	Built	Henry Knox monument is installed on the site, commemorating Knox's role in acquiring and placing cannons in Dorchester Heights, resulting in the eventual evacuation of the British from Boston.
CE 1928	Built	Contractor named O'Toole installs concrete walks and gutters on the site.
CE 1934 - 1935	Altered	Engineer Charles W. Killam alters the Dorchester Heights Monument.
CE 1940	Planned	The 1940 Boston Parks plan proposes extensive grading to create a series of terraces that would assist in stormwater drainage and accommodate the grade changes due to the addition of stairs and walls.
CE 1951	Established	Dorchester Heights becomes a National Historic Site, but remains under the ownership and management of the City of Boston.
CE 1951	Built	Chainlink fencing is installed, seperating Thomas Park from South Boston High School.
CE 1966	Memorialized	Dorchester Heights is added to the National Register of Historic Places.
CE 1968	Planned	Plan done by Vollmer Associates proposes the removal or replacement of the benches on site.
CE 1972 - 1982	Restored	National Park Services restores the Dorchester Heights Monument.
CE 1978	Land Transfer	City of Boston transfers Dorchester Heights to the National Park Service.
CE 1978	Preserved	Dorchester Heights is added to the Boston National Historic Park under the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978.
CE 1980	Land Transfer	Transfer of ownership from the City of Boston to the federal government occurs on March 4, 1980.

Year	Event	Major Event Narrative
CE 1980	Planned	National Park Service proposes filling all eroded areas to alleve drainage problems, repairing broken concrete walks, installing bollards on the southern side of the site, repairing and painting benches, extensive repairs to all walls and stairs, and the addition of aluminum handrails.
CE 1982	Built	The Allied War Veterans Monument is installed in 1982.
CE 1995 - 1997	Rehabilitated	Rehabilitation at Dorchester Heights from 1995 to 1997 included regrading of the site to minimize slope creep, installation of new stairs, retaining walls and ramps, removal of shade trees, replanting of trees in allèes, and installation of new lighting fixtures, benches, and trash receptacles.

Physical History:

The following section provides information on the physical development and evolution of the Dorchester Heights National Historic Site, organized by time periods. The site's history is detailed in "Dorchester Heights/Thomas Park: Cultural Landscape Report for Boston National Historical Park, South Boston" (1993) by Cynthia Zaitzevsky. Other sources for the site history included "Historic Structure Report: Dorchester Heights Monument, South Boston, Massachusetts" (1993), "The Fort on the First Hill in Dorchester, Archeological Investigations of Colonel Gridley's Revolutionary War Star Fort at Dorchester Heights, South Boston, Massachusetts" by James W. Mueller, Steven R. Pendery, and William A. Griswold, and "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form – Dorchester Heights Historic District" (2001) prepared by Edward Gordon, with Betsy Friedberg. This section of the CLI includes information extracted from the aforementioned sources. Graphics associated with this section are located at the end of this report.

EARLY SETTLEMENT (PRE-1775)

Pre-settlement:
Prior to European contact, the South Boston area was inhabited by members of Algonquin Native American tribe, believed to be concentrated at “Pow-Wow Point” (near current day K Street). This area served as a meeting ground and possibly a burial ground, and provided the inhabitants with a fresh-water spring and agricultural opportunities for maize, beans, squash, and pumpkins. However, by the time the first permanent English settlement on Dorchester Neck was established in 1635, the Native American population of New England had been decimated by disease. Two epidemics over a seventeen-year period are believed to have resulted in a mortality rate as high as 95% (Dorchester Heights/Thomas Park: Cultural Landscape Report for Boston National Historical Park, South Boston [hereafter CLR] 1993:8).

European Settlement of Dorchester:
Dorchester, rather than Boston, was actually the first contact site of the English colonists, although permanent settlement did not take place in Dorchester until a few years after their arrival. In 1630, the “Mary and John,” carrying 140 passengers from southwestern England, arrived in Boston Harbor before the arrival of John Winthrop’s fleet carrying Puritan dissidents who would establish the Massachusetts Bay Colony. After landing at Watertown and Nantasket, the “Mary and John” moved on to the Dorchester Neck, which the Indians then called Mattapanock. Here, the settlers lived in tents and cottages and set up a fort next to the water. They named the site “Dorchester” after their native town in England (CLR 1993:9).

In 1635, the Reverend Richard Mather established a permanent settlement further inland at Dorchester. At that time, the Mattapanock peninsula was composed of rolling hills, fruit orchards, and grazing land for cattle. For most of the 17th century, the peninsula was used for communal pasturage by the residents of Dorchester. However, a few proprietors began to build substantial houses, primarily at the eastern and western ends of the peninsula, where they farmed and maintained orchards. In 1634, the first fort on the strategically placed island just off the shore of the peninsula was built. Referred to as “a castle with mud walls,” it was rebuilt by British military engineers in the early 18th century and called Castle William (CLR 1993:9).

By the mid-eighteenth century, there were only three poorly maintained roads that provided access to Dorchester Neck. The first and main road was known as “the way to the Castle,” which followed the path of Dorchester, Emerson, and East Fourth Streets from the town of Dorchester to Castle William’s boat landing at City Point. The second, known as Nook’s Lane or “the Causeway” roughly followed the path of Seventh Street. The final road extended southward from what is now East Fourth Street, roughly following the path of K Street, and was known as the “way to Pow-Wow Point.” The area at the time was pastoral in character, with numerous small ponds and an assortment of elm, buttonwood, poplar, and willow trees dotting the landscape which provided shade for grazing animals (National Register of Historic Places Registration Form- Dorchester Heights Historic District [hereafter National Register 2001],Sec.8:4).

In the following century, Oliver Wiswell owned farmland that included the present Thomas Park and also built a house, barn and established cherry orchards. The house and a skating pond may have been located 600 ft. north of Thomas Park, near the angled bend in the present Fourth Street. The house faced northward towards the road known as “the way to the Castle.” By the 1770s, ten or twelve families lived on Dorchester Neck. In August 1775, before the fortification of the Heights, ten buildings were shown on Dorchester Peninsula, six of which were near the northeastern base of Telegraph Hill (The Fort on the First Hill in Dorchester, Archeological Investigations of Colonel Gridley ’s Revolutionary War Star Fort at Dorchester Heights, South Boston, Massachusetts [hereafter ARCH] 1998:8; National Register 2001,Sec. 8:5).

WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE (1775-1783)

During the 1770s, the British militia had a considerable presence in the city of Boston, with extensive fortifications in both Boston and Charlestown, as well as Castle William, located a short distance from the shore on Castle Island. Following the Battle of Bunker Hill in June 1775, General George Washington took command of the Continental Army and began plans to engage the British forces in Boston, eager to break the stalemate that had occurred. His initial plan was to attack Boston directly by crossing the frozen Charles River in the winter, but instead was advised to gain control of Dorchester Heights (CLR 1993:11).

In the summer and early fall of 1775, the dozen or so families that were living on Dorchester Neck vacated their homes, opting to move further inland, away from the British forces stationed on Castle Island. On February 13, 1776, the British sent a reconnaissance force to Dorchester Heights in order to learn more about what would be needed to secure it, and discovered that fortifying the hills would be more difficult than originally thought. The force also burned many of the vacated houses on Dorchester Neck (CLR 1993:11).

The solution to fortifying Dorchester Heights was delivered to George Washington in February 1776, in the form of a letter from engineer Colonel Rufus Putnam. The letter outlined methods for occupying the Heights, including a number of diagrammatic sketches. Putnam later met with Colonel Richard Gridley, the engineer at Bunker Hill, and Henry Knox, then the commander of the Continental Regiment of Artillery, where he proposed the idea of “chandeliers.” When used in a military sense, chandelier refers to a wooden structure with horizontal and vertical members designed to hold fascines (rough bundles of brush-wood), stones, and dirt, which would provide protection from enemy fire. They were particularly effective against musketry fire and grapeshot (loose ammunition loaded into cannon to create a greater range of dispersal), which had proved devastating in other battles. Both Knox and Gridley approved of the idea, and Washington gave the authorization to put the plan into action. For the next two weeks, under the direction of Knox and Gridley, the soldiers constructed enough chandeliers and fascines to provide the protection needed to hold Dorchester Heights (CLR 1993:11).

On the nights of March 2, 3, and 4, 1776, Washington ordered a diversionary bombardment on Boston, causing the British to focus their attention and return fire to Washington’s camp in Cambridge. On the night of March 4, under the cover of darkness, General John Thomas led a group of 1,200 men across the causeway to Dorchester Heights to set up the fortifications. The endeavor required over 300 oxcarts loaded with the chandeliers, entrenching tools, hay (which was laid on the ground to muffle the sound of movement), and the fascines. Many of the oxcarts made three return trips with additional supplies. Once on the site, Gridley directed the placement of the chandeliers, which required digging almost two feet into the frozen ground in order to provide a secure footing. Other defensive measures included barrels full of stones to roll down the hill on the enemy and an abatis (formed from felled trees bundled together and then placed in front of the fortifications to create an obstacle). Also mounted into the fortifications were 59 cannons brought to Boston from Fort Ticonderoga by Knox in January 1776. By the morning of March 5, a continuous line of fortifications had been built across the two hills that comprised Dorchester Heights. March 5 had been symbolically chosen for the completion of the fortification, as it was the anniversary of the 1770 Boston Massacre (CLR 1993:12; ARCH 1998:18; National Register 2001,Sec.8:7).

Concerning the British reaction, General William Howe was heard to say, “I know not what I shall do, the rebels have done more in one night than my whole army would have done in weeks.” Although Howe apparently had considered removing his troops from Boston in the fall of 1775, he ordered an attack on Dorchester Heights in response to these provocations of the colonial fortifications. The attack was halted when the British militia (from Castle William) and the British fleet were forced to turn back because of stormy weather. On March 17, the British evacuated Boston after spiking the cannon and dumping military stores and other useful goods into Boston Harbor (ARCH 1998:20).

One of the earliest maps to show the March 1776 fortifications on Dorchester Heights was “Plan of Boston” drawn by Henry Pelham, a Loyalist who published the map in England in 1777 (Figure 1).

On the map, the fortifications appear as a solid line crowning the two hills of Dorchester featuring four rectangular, bastion-like projections, and are labeled as “New Works 1776. The Twin Hills.” The map is roughly consistent with a frontal, but distant, sketch showing a continuous line of fortifications along the northern mid-slope of Dorchester Heights (ARCH 1998:20).

Soon after the British evacuation, Washington moved his headquarters to New York, but left instructions with Henry Knox and General Ward regarding fortifications to protect the port of Boston from further British aggression. This defensive network included fortifications at Dorchester Heights, Castle Island, Point Shirley, Governor’s Island, Fox Hill Battery, Noodle’s Island, Boston, and Charlestown. Compared to the other structures built, the ones at Dorchester Heights were relatively small and of secondary importance, due to the site’s inland position. On the first hill (Telegraph Hill, the site of today’s Thomas Park) was a more elaborate fort in a hexagonal shape. Designed by Colonel Gridley, the fort’s defensive measures included a ramp and gate, gun platforms, banquettes, parapets, a dry moat, glacis, and abatis, as well as a parade ground within the fort. The fort on the second hill (Bird Hill) was less complicated and built in a rectangular shape, with semi-bastioned corners (ARCH 1998:20-21).

On May 13, 1776, Colonel Richard Gridley wrote to Washington informing him “the Dorchester Point Forts are now in a posture of defense with platforms laid and cannon mounted on them.” Gridley continued to strengthen the defenses around Boston Harbor until at least 1778, although no further battles were fought in the Boston area during the Revolutionary War. Although fortifications were still occurring in the area, the forces stationed at Dorchester Heights dropped greatly as the threat of the British returning decreased. As early as December 1776, there were reports of as few as six or eight men to take care of the forts, while other reports stated the forts were vacant. Additional forces were sent there, but in October 1780, the detachment was reduced to nine local citizens (CLR 1993:12,15,18).

In November 1776, after fortifications on both hills was completed, there were eighteen buildings shown on Dorchester Peninsula. At this time on the hills of Dorchester Heights, there were six buildings, including two located in the swale between the hills, accessible by two roads leading to Castle William and to Pow-Wow Point. The former road connected to the Dorchester Turnpike and to the meetinghouse road on the mainland (ARCH 1998:8).

On March 6, 1804, the Massachusetts General Court annexed Dorchester Neck, where Dorchester Heights was located, to the Town of Boston, renaming the area South Boston. At the time it was annexed, there were only three dozen tax-paying residents of South Boston. One of the stipulations of the annexation was that a bridge linking Boston to the new South Boston be built at the expense of private investors, not the taxpayers. The bridge was completed in 1805, but due to the bridge tolls, it deterred travel across it and hindered the rise of land values in South Boston. The primary purpose of annexing Dorchester Neck and building the bridge was to encourage development, requiring the improvement of road systems in South Boston. In 1805, a local surveyor, Mather Withington, began a plan for laying out streets in a grid pattern. Due to the problems that the terrain of Dorchester Heights presented, he neglected to delineate streets in the area bounded by East 4th Street, G Street, East 8th Street, and Old Harbor Street. The development of the area resulted in a population spike from 60 residents in 1804 to 354 residents in 1810 (CLR 1993:28; National Register 2001,Sec.8:8).

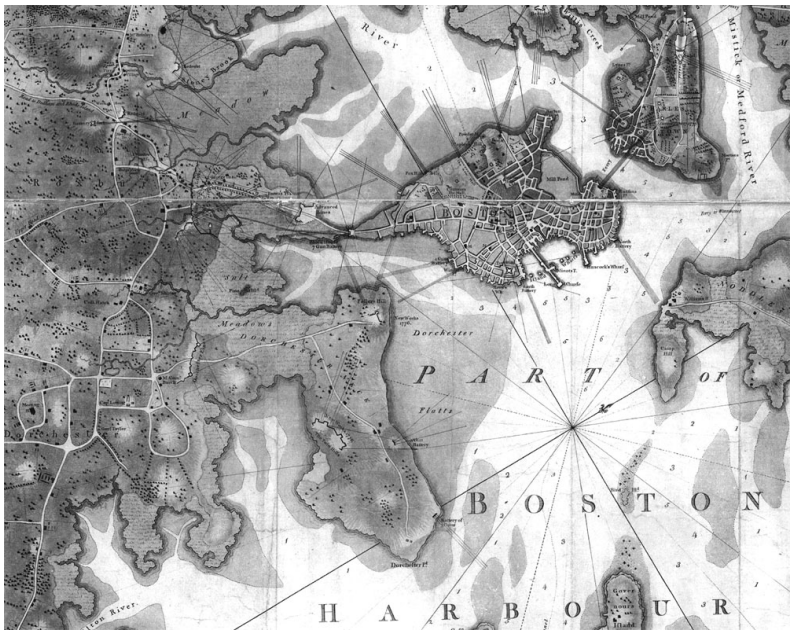


Figure 1. A 1777 Map of Boston drawn by Henry Pelham, which shows the Dorchester Heights fortifications and has them labeled as "New Works-1776." The works are located on the Dorchester Peninsula, southwest of Boston (Library of Congress, Map Division).

POST-REVOLUTIONARY USE OF THE SITE

War of 1812 Fortifications:
In June of 1812, the United States was again at war with Great Britain. Because of South Boston's position in Boston Harbor, several regiments of militia were quartered there. By September 1814, there were reports that British troops were advancing on Boston from the Maine coast, creating a public desire for strengthened fortifications around the city. As the result of an appeal from the Boston Town government, Boston's harbor fortifications were re-built between mid-September and mid-October 1814, largely by volunteer groups. Rebuilding the works on Dorchester Heights was part of a local effort initiated by the Boston Selectmen in 1814, and among those working on Dorchester Heights were the Roman Catholic Bishop of Boston, Jean Louis de Cheverus, and 250 of his parishioners, who constructed a new powder house and erected platforms to hold cannon. These fortifications were not constructed with the same science and craftsmanship that the 1776 structures had been built with, and were falling apart before the War of 1812 ended the following year. Boston never came under attack in the War of 1812, and despite the modifications done to the forts, Dorchester Heights was not considered a strategic location in the defense of Boston's harbor (CLR 1993:18).

Decline of 1812 Fortifications:
Other than two documents describing the 1814 ramparts being in ruinous condition in 1824, no written descriptions of these fortifications after 1814 have been located. However, the decline and eventual disappearance of the fortifications can easily be traced in a series of historical maps and views. The earliest of these is a print entitled "Boston from Dorchester Heights" and published in London in 1838. In the foreground, one bastion of one of the forts is clearly visible. It is obviously a partially eroded earthwork with dirt paths and a safety handrail, but it cannot be determined which fort is depicted. Another engraving from the time, "View of the City of Boston from Dorchester Heights" (Figure 2), shows the early use of the site as a place for recreational purposes amongst the fort ruins (CLR 1993:19).

Two maps conclude the sequence of visual documents for the fortifications after 1814. The first, entitled "Map of Boston and Immediate Neighborhood," was surveyed by H. McIntyre and published in 1852. It is probably the most detailed Boston map of its period. The detail shows Dorchester Heights and its surroundings in a state of transition. The easternmost of the two forts, the one on Bird Hill, appears as a roughly-bastioned rectangular fortification. On Telegraph Hill, the half-oval reservoir has been completed on the eastern side. There are no fortifications depicted on Telegraph Hill, although, as seen in drawings of the time, some may have survived in some form. Thomas Street has not yet been constructed and there is no park laid out in this map (CLR 1993:22).



Figure 2. 1841 engraving by Robert Havell,"View of the city of Boston from Dorchester Heights," showing the site as a recreation place and taking in the view prior to the construction of the park (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs collection).

SITE DEVELOPMENT AS A PARK

Thomas Park:
During the second quarter of the 19th century, South Boston became increasingly built up with a corresponding growth in population. In 1828, a second, toll-free bridge, known as the North Free Bridge, was built, providing a more direct route into Boston and encouraging settlement in South Boston. The increase in the population of South Boston reflected growth in Boston as a whole; both were due in large part to an influx of immigrants fleeing the 1845 potato famine in Ireland. Some of Boston's Irish immigrants settled in South Boston. Others settled in central locations, such as the North End and Fort Hill, displacing residents who moved to South Boston and other relatively outlying parts of the city. In addition, South Boston increasingly became home to a large number of medical, penal, and reform institutions, discouraging residential development in the area until the late 1850s when many of the institutions were removed (Figure 3) (CLR 1993:28; National Register 2001,Sec.8:10-11).

In 1847, more than 1700 residents of South Boston sent a petition to the Mayor of Boston itemizing a list of complaints and asking for improved services from the city. The complaints focused on the heavy use of the district for housing the impoverished, disabled, and criminal, and suggested development of a quiet, conservative, middle class community instead. The residents requested street grading, paving, and improved street lighting. However, the most critical needs identified were to have South Boston connected with the Cochituate water system, which was being planned for the City of Boston, and the development of open spaces. The summit of Telegraph Hill, the more western hill of Dorchester Heights, was selected as the site for both a reservoir and a new park or "common." Regarding the park, the petition to the Mayor of Boston stated that the land should be encircled with a carriage drive, have footpaths to the outside, and be ornamented with trees. The water supply request was acted on promptly, and the 7.5 million-gallon reservoir came to be known as the South Boston Reservoir, which was completed in 1849. However, the request for development of an open space did not happen for several more years (CLR 1993:28; National Register 2001,Sec.8:12).

The development of Thomas Park is associated with two related but somewhat distinct patterns of events. First, it was a part of the sanitary reform and public health movement of the mid-19th century (which was also an important component of the movement for large parks in Boston and elsewhere). References to health are found repeatedly in documents concerning the park, as in the Boston City government's response to the South Boston Memorial of 1847, stating that such a park would aid "the health and recreation of those whose means and business confines them during the year to the limits of the City." The second event associated with the park development was the city parks movement. Thomas Park is unique among other city parks of the time, since the site was a new rather than a redesigned park. Also, most early small parks were in the centers of large cities, and Thomas Park demonstrates that there was interest in establishing small parks in outlying parts of cities as a civic service and public amenity (CLR 1993:33,34,38).

In 1850, site planning for Thomas Park began, and a number of plans were considered. Stephen Tucker, then Superintendent of Public Lands, prepared a plan for the park, but, since Tucker's plan has not been located, it is unsure whether his design was carried out. Three other plans were considered, the first of which predated the consideration of the park. A. Wadsworth's "Plan of South Boston, 1842" shows the location of the prospective reservoir and park, with the encircling street shown as an oval. The eastern third of the enclosed area is marked as "Reservoir" and the western two-thirds as "Linden Park." It is likely that although the date of the base map is 1842, the location map was superimposed on top of it between 1847 and 1849 when the construction began. The second early plan in the Boston Department of Public Works (DPW) archives is not accredited to a designer, but is dated May 3, 1847. It portrays the reservoir as a half-donut shape, and what is presumably the 1814 fort remains. Similar to the Wadsworth Plan, this plan also shows the area enclosed by an ovoid street. The third early plan, presumed to be from between 1847 and 1855, is a South Boston street map that includes a plan for both the reservoir and the park. The paths depicted in the plan are close, though not identical, to the current paths in the park. Because of the strong similarities, it is inferred that this third plan was the original plan for the park (CLR 1993:39-40).

With the addition of the park in 1852, came the development of a middle-class neighborhood, as had been requested in the petition. Other concerns presented were met, as streets were graded, leveled, and widened, shade trees were planted along the roads, gas lighting on the streets was introduced, and the street railways were established not far from Dorchester Heights. The area to the north developed first, due to its proximity to the industrial and commercial areas of Boston (National Register 2001,Sec.8:14-15).

In 1872, the Cochituate water supply for the reservoir became insufficient and temporary connections were made with the Sudbury River. Between 1875 and 1878, a permanent Sudbury system was built to augment Cochituate. The South Boston Reservoir went out of service on July 15, 1872 but was kept partially filled for use in fire emergencies (CLR 1993:32).

The 1874-1876 South Boston volume of the "Atlas of the County of Suffolk" shows Thomas Park set into the grid street pattern of South Boston (Figure 4). At the time the plan was drawn, the flag was in the place where the Dorchester Heights Monument now stands, and served as the focal point for the park. In addition, the plan also shows the pathways of the park laid out in a fashion nearly identical to the paths today. The plan also shows the heavy development of the area north of the park, as compared to the lack of development in the south due to troublesome terrain (CLR 1993:40,180).

The earliest photographs of Thomas Park are two stereographs, ca. 1877-1878, which reflect the refurbishing of the park that occurred around that time. New light-colored, backless benches are shown set into one side of the central walk, which is flanked by young, newly planted trees. In addition, the central walk appears to be both new and hard-surfaced, probably illustrating the asphalting or "concreting" of walks described in the City Auditor's Annual Report of 1874. Another addition to the site that is seen in the stereographs is the 1876 Centennial Monument. This small granite marker commemorating the one-hundredth anniversary of the British evacuation from Boston, was installed on the site in 1877, after lobbying from local citizens for a memorial (CLR 1993:53-54).

In 1881, two important changes were noted for Thomas Park and some of the other small parks. The

iron fence around the park was removed because it was in bad repair, and for the first, and apparently only time, flower beds were planted. About fences, Superintendent of Common and Public Grounds, William Doogue, wrote: “The fences on many of the city squares are much out of repair, and will require a large outlay to put them in good condition. The committee has considered the plan adopted by some other cities of having no fences around the squares, and have tried the experiment by removing the fences around Telegraph Hill and so far as they have learned, with general satisfaction to the citizens.” There is some question about whether the iron fence actually was removed from Thomas Park; the possibility also exists that it may have been removed, stored somewhere, and then replaced at a later date (CLR 1993:54).

In 1891, the Superintendent reported briefly on the condition of the park: “Thomas Park, otherwise known as Telegraph Hill is not in a very creditable condition, notwithstanding the considerable amounts of money which have been expended on it. This is due to the fact that various games such as baseball, croquet, etc. have been permitted in it. The grassed banks have been injured, settees badly wrecked, and other wanton acts committed. This state of affairs is no doubt in a measure owing to the fact that no police protection had been accorded to it” (CLR 1993:56).

Other changes during the time include the removal of the South Boston Reservoir in 1899 to create space for the South Boston High School. At the time, South Boston was the only neighborhood without a high school, which was cited as the reason the area did not attract wealthier families. A street plan from 1899 shows the footprint of the High School already in place (Figure 5). Construction of the reservoir had already altered the topography of the hill through cutting and filling, lowering the crest of the drumlin more than six feet. When the reservoir was destroyed, it changed the topography again, creating a steep slope on the eastern side of the park where part of the reservoir embankment remained (CLR 1993:5; National Register 2001,Sec.8:20).

Dorchester Heights Monument:
By the 1890’s, many felt that Thomas Park’s simple, granite monument commemorating the Revolutionary War was inadequate and a more imposing one should be constructed. The Massachusetts state government took responsibility for funding the structure, but the initiative came from a South Boston resident, John J. Toomey, who became a state representative in 1897 (Historic Structure Report: Dorchester Heights Monument, South Boston, Massachusetts [hereafter HSR] 1993:3).

An invited design competition was held, with invitations sent out to eight prominent Boston architecture firms, including the office of Peabody and Stearns, whose design was selected. Their winning design proposed a Colonial Revival tower in brick with an elaborate entrance and base that included a fountain. However, for reasons of economy, Peabody and Stearns’ design was simplified (Figure 6). In the original design, the second-stage arcade and third-stage cupola and spire were similar to what was eventually constructed but were much more highly ornamented. Windows with balconies were substituted for the clocks of the original design, and columns and spandrel details were removed from the second-stage arcade. In addition, the entrance to the tower was simplified, and the fountain was eliminated from the base. The construction material was changed from the proposed granite or brick to a white marble veneer, and decorative detail was eliminated (HSR 1993:14).

The construction of the Dorchester Heights Monument appears to have been done with minimal disruption to the existing landscape of the park, although Robert Peabody expressed concern about completing the portion of the landscape that had been disrupted around the monument base. The natural elevation of 148.5 feet in front of the monument entrance was lowered by an unspecified amount, according to Peabody and Stearns’ specifications, in order to “remove all loam from the site of the building and for fifty feet outside of it on every side.” The lowered natural elevation appeared to be the construction grade, from which a foundation hole was dug for the placement of the foundation piers/pillar and walls. During the backfilling of the foundation, it is possible that the cannon (or cannons) that was fired for the dedication of the South Boston Reservoir was buried when the Monument was constructed, as it would have been easier to bury the cannon (which had been abandoned for about fifty years on the hilltop), than it would have been to haul it away. The burial of the cannon would explain the large magnetic anomaly discovered at the Monument during the

geophysical survey, but the theory has yet to be tested (CLR 1993:57; HSR 1993:18-19).

The numerous early photographs of the monument and park reveal a simple landscape treatment of grass and trees that was common for the period (Figure 7). Peabody and Stearns also planned for the beautification of the remains of the earthen embankment that remained from the South Boston Reservoir, which was located east of the monument, just to the west of South Boston High School, completed in 1899, just east of Thomas Park. The beautification consisted "of a design for terracing in a suitable manner this at present unsightly slope…[to] form an agreeable link between the handsome high school building and the Monument above it." The planned slope was not completed at that time. Plan and photographs from around this time show the relationship between the monument and the high school properties and the use of the site as a park (Figures 8 and 9) (CLR 1993:57; HSR 1993:18).

Around the time the Dorchester Heights Monument was built, a number of changes to small-scale features around the site occurred. Prior to the monument construction, the space at the top of the hill had been occupied by a flagpole (installed in 1874), which was displaced to its current location west of the monument in 1901. In 1905, an iron railing and gateway around the base of the monument was planned and constructed as a way to deter vandals and avoid resulting deterioration of the marble (Figure 10). When consulted, the tower architect, Peabody, responded that, "We have long known that the children climbed over it and defaced the stonework. I was glad to see that the disfigurement principally consists in the marking made by their boots as they climbed over the terrace walls." He also commented on the proposed fence, but recommended that the fence be built directly on the parapet (CLR 1993:40; HSR 1993:27).

In 1911, Charles Logue, Acting Superintendent of the Department of Public Grounds, wrote:
"The monument at Thomas Park, frequently called 'Dorchester Heights,' is in very bad shape; in fact its appearance is so defective that I had some fears as to the stability of its walls and accordingly requested messrs. Peabody and Stearns, the original architects for the monument, to make an examination of its condition. When this was done, I was informed that there were 'no structural defects and that no settlement was evident; that practically all the defects noticeable were on the exterior and due to the action of the elements.' It is evident that the monument needs a general repointing and repairing, as there are many visible and long open spaces in mortar joints between the marble blocks and as many of the stones are chipped, possible by the 'souvenir fiend,' they will have to be removed and redressed. The character of the repairs required, which will probably develop some unforeseen difficulties as the work progresses, precludes the possibility of letting out a contract for any fixed sum, but provisional specifications and restrictions on the work may be made. It may also be desirable to increase the height of the monument at the same time" ("Annual Report of the Public Grounds Department for the Year 1910-1911," City Documents No. 29-1911, page 4, accessed from CLR 1993: 57, 60).

Olmsted Brothers Survey:
In 1912-1913, D. H. Sullivan, Superintendent of the Department of Public Grounds, submitted the last Annual Report of the Public Grounds Department, in which he reported on the successful completion of repairs to the monument. In this year, the Public Grounds Department merged with the Park Department. Anticipating that a large amount of money would be available from the Parkman Fund for small city parks and squares, the Boston Park Department had most of the sites surveyed under the direction of the Olmsted Brothers in 1913 (CLR 1993:60).

The resulting Olmsted Brothers topographic map for Thomas Park shows the same path configuration as in 1874, but for the first time, contours are depicted (Figure 11). No steps are shown, and, except for a proposed concrete walk leading to an entrance at the northeast corner of the park, existing walks are labeled being tar, with a detail showing cinders under the proposed concrete walk (CLR 1993:60).

One of the most interesting aspects of the 1913 survey is that all existing trees are identified, at least by initials indicating the botanical names. Although there is no plant key on the plan, it is reasonable to surmise which trees are referred to by the initials labeled. The predominant tree is abbreviated as Ua (American elm, Ulmus americana), shown lining the central path and most of the other interior

paths, with the exception of gaps in spacing, and substitution of different trees in a few places. The sidewalk on the southern, park side of Thomas Park Street is lined predominantly with Tv, probably Tilia variety (Linden), presumably from the original planting of this sidewalk. Again, there are a few substitutions of different trees along this walk, including American elm. On the sidewalk of the northern part of Thomas Park Street, the planting is primarily American elm. In the interior of the park, American elms are again dominant, but there are specimens of Ap (probably Norway maple, Acer platanoides), Fa (probably American ash, Fraxinus americana), and Pa (probably London plane tree, Platanus acerifolia). The location of the flagpole, seats along the central walk, and a fountain at the western end of the central walk are all clearly shown (CLR 1993:60).

In 1927, the Henry Knox Monument was installed just south of the Dorchester Heights Monument. This monument was a 4'-tall, tombstone-shaped marker, approximately 1'-deep with rough carved edges. A smooth face of the marker faces the monument and bears an inscription describing Henry Knox's role in bringing the cannons from the Fort Ticonderoga, which led to the evacuation of the British from Boston. A bronze plate depicting the bringing of the cannons by oxcart was mounted at the top of the monument. Aerial photographs from this time show the canopy coverage of the park, as well as individual trees, presenting a photo of the park that is close to the vegetative plan presented by the Olmsted Brothers survey (Figure 12). Around this time, a new addition was built on the monument side of the high school, changing the symmetry of the building's design (CLR 1993:66,130). In addition to its recreational uses, the site continued to serve its commemorative roles and was annually the setting of numerous events, which included an annual wreath laying ceremony at the Centennial Monument on Evacuation Day (Figure 13).

Changes in Ownership:
In the course of its history, the Dorchester Heights Monument has been under the jurisdiction of five different entities. It was paid for by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and its design and construction overseen by the Committee on Design of the Governor's Council (1898-1905). Its care and maintenance became the responsibility of the City of Boston's Department of Common and Public Grounds (ca. 1906-1912). Although expenditures for Thomas Park are reported for that time, the amounts are small and were probably for routine maintenance of the park, and no specific expenditures are itemized for the monument (HSR 1993:20).

In 1912, the Department of Common and Public Grounds was dissolved and the Boston Park Department assumed full responsibility for the monument and park (1912-1951). The Annual Reports of the Boston Park Department generally list Thomas Park only as a line item, without specifying what kind of work was done. There is sometimes an additional listing for Dorchester Heights, which may refer to the monument structure alone (HSR 1993:20).

Although an Act was passed in 1939 authorizing the City of Boston to convey the Dorchester Heights Monument and adjoining land to the United States as a National Historic Monument (1939- Chapter 148), no action was taken until 1951, when a Memorandum of Agreement was signed between the City of Boston and the United States government (MOA, March 17, 1951, signed and sealed by Oscar Chapman, Secretary of the Interior, and John B. Hynes, Mayor of Boston). At this time, Dorchester Heights Monument and the surrounding 5.43-cre Thomas Park became Dorchester Heights National Historic Site. After this, the maintenance and repair of the Monument and grounds appear to have been the joint responsibility of the Boston Park Department and the National Park Service (1951-1979). Both the City and the United States government appear to have spent money on the monument and site during this 28-year period, but the lines of demarcation between the responsibilities of the Boston Park Department and the National Park Service are not always clear.

The move to add Dorchester Heights National Historic Site to the Boston National Historical Park, which was established in 1974, was lead by Massachusetts House Representative John Joseph Moakley, who proposed that the site be included on the 1978 Omnibus Parks bill. On November 10, 1978, Dorchester Heights National Historic Site was added to the Boston National Historical Park through Public Law 95-625, as part of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978. The transfer occurred on September 8, 1980 as part of a boundary change to Boston National Historical Park (General Management Plan, 1974:1).

Additional Work on the Site:
Information on routine maintenance of the monument is scarce for all periods of its history. As previously mentioned, the addition of the iron fencing and gate, ca. 1905, was done primarily as a deterrent to damage and vandalism of the monument. In 1938, the Boston Art Department reported that "the Dorchester Heights Monument has been protected by additions to the surrounding fence costing $45," though no plan or contract has been found that describes the additions. In 1946, the Boston Art Department recorded that the Park Department had replaced a missing bronze transom, cleaned the Henry Knox Monument which was "badly marked," and to remove graffiti ("paint inscriptions") from the 1876 Centennial Monument. In 1954, the Annual Report of the Art Department noted that the site had been turned over to the National Park Service and was no longer in the Department's care. It was also reported that a new plaque had been unveiled and that one of the smaller stones (1877 or 1927) was in dirty condition (HSR 1993:33).

There seems to be no systematic recording of routine maintenance of the monument during the National Park Service ownership. However, a series of items in the files at the Boston National Historical Park, Charlestown, Massachusetts, indicates that in 1964, shrub roses were planted, both as a deterrent to vandalism and as a method of concealing minor defacement when it occurred. Seventy-five Father Hugo rose (Rosa hugonis) were apparently planted in the fall of that year and supplied by the Framingham Landscape Company of Framingham Centre, Massachusetts. Thorned shrubs such as pyracantha, which would have been more expensive but probably more effective as a deterrent, were rejected as a choice, because it was anticipated that the planting would last only a few years before being pulled up by vandals (HSR 1993:33).

In 1968, Vollmer Associates prepared plans for the extensive refurbishing of Thomas Park (Figure 14). The plan called for many new trees and shrubs, including mass plantings of flowering quince and crabapples. Very few, if any of the proposed plants remain on the site today (CLR 1993:66).

In the mid-1970s, at the time studies were underway to add the site to Boston National Historical Park, Dorchester Heights National Historic Site was in a state of disrepair and suffered from vandalism and misuse (Figure 15). The site had become a hodge-podge of collapsing retaining walls, broken sidewalks, litter, and overgrown grass. It was not used for recreation purposes by the people of the neighborhood due to fears about safety and rowdy teenagers (Ian Menzies 1978).

Also occurring in 1978 was the preparation of the "Complete Report for Renovation of High Point Observatory & Dorchester Heights Memorial Tower" by Schoenfeld Associates. This work, undertaken in 1977-1978, entailed one of the most comprehensive repair programs ever undertaken on the monument, requiring work from the foundation to the weathervane. The exterior marble facing was repointed using a "softer" mortar mix in places where joints had deteriorated, as well as sealing marble sections, that had cracks or fissures. Other exterior finishes included replacing mission sections of stone balustrades on the first and second levels, and the cleaning of the entire exterior. Also, important structural work occurred at the first level, where the entire floor structure was totally rebuilt (HSR 1993:47).

Between October 1994 and May 1996, three sessions of excavations and numerous monitoring sessions took place to determine if archeological remains from the March 1776 fortress remained on the site. The first archeological field session between October and December 1994 resulted in the discovery of the ditch surrounding the May 1776 fort. Subsequent field sessions opened up large areas of block excavations at the fort entrance (1995) and at the magazine foundation (1996). Archeological monitoring of construction in 1995 resulted in the discovery of the magazine foundation and of the stopcock chamber for the former reservoir (ARCH 1998:37).

Major Renovations:
Between 1995 and 1997, major renovations occurred at Dorchester Heights. Spearheaded by funding from Congressman Moakley, the site focused on resolving issues with accessibility, slope, and vegetation. The most visible change to site occurred with the extensive regrading across the site, resulting in the complete rebuilding of the stairs, ramps, and retaining walls. The regrading was done to reduce the severity of the slope to allow for easier maintenance and to discourage slope-creep. At each of the three entrances, the new retaining walls display built-in, informational panels

that give a short history of the site's role in the American Revolution. To increase accessibility to the site, the National Park Service lengthened the ramps to decrease their slope. This changed the geometry of the circulation paths, but they retained their overall symmetry. The site's vegetation also went through changes during this period. The re-grading caused a number of non-historic shade trees to be removed from the site, and they were replaced with plantings of sugar maples (Acer saccharum) and red oak (Quercus rubrum) in allèes along the pathways. The redesign of the site also introduced new site features, including replacing the benches, removing the utilitarian cobra-head lighting and installing acorn-head fixtures, and new trash receptacles. The chainlink fence along the eastern perimeter, which separated the site from South Boston High School, was replaced by a black wrought-iron fence during this time (Interview, Ruth Raphael, 2010).

"No Man's Land":
Over the years, the area of land directly east of the park, between the monument and the high school, became known as "No Man's Land," referencing the lack of jurisdiction for the space. While the land did not fall within the boundary of Dorchester Heights National Historic Site, and was not the responsibility of the National Park Service, the school district would not claim responsibility for it, leading the space to become overgrown and a hub for unlawful behavior. In 1996, Michael Dowling, a public artist in Boston, began taking groups of students there to take care of the landscape and build a space for their use. The design of the space was based on a Celtic tradition of building cairns (manmade piles of stones), and stone circles as memorial markers of special occasions and as a way to tell stories. Since it was built, the area has served as a place for the community to hold memorials, performances, and serve as a teaching space (Interview, Ruth Raphael, 2010).

Current Plans for the Site:
Anticipated for the year 2011, the National Park Service has planned a series of projects for Dorchester Heights National Historic Site. The trees in the main allèe, planted in the 1997 renovations, were incorrectly installed, leading to stunted growth. One of the major plans for 2011 is to remedy the situation by trenching the area to add drip irrigation and proper drainage for the trees. Also planned is installation of additional benches and trash receptacles around the site and replacement of the Monument up-lighting. For the Monument itself, interior re-pointing is scheduled. Finally, the National Park Service intends to install gates into the fence that currently runs between the site and South Boston High School, connecting the site with the landscape of "No Man's Land" (Interview, Ruth Raphael, 2010).



Figure 3. This 1846 map shows the two hills of Dorchester (marked by stars on the left side of the map halfway down) as they relate to the growing urban environment around them (Suffolk County of Deeds).

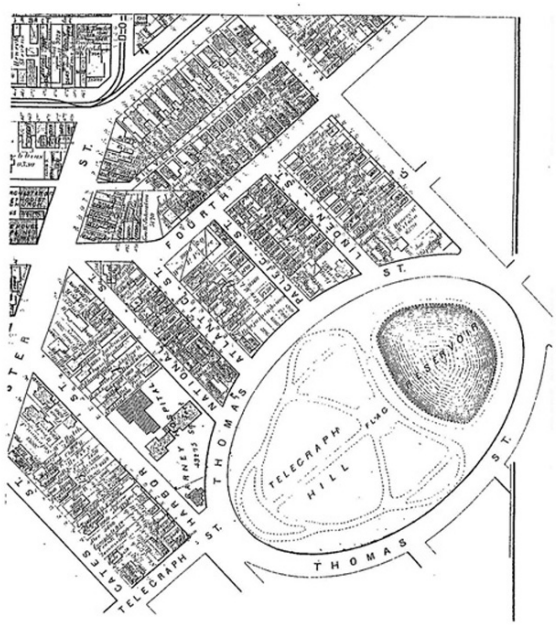


Figure 4. 1874 map from the "Atlas of the County of Suffolk" by G.M. Hopkins, showing the siting of Thomas Park within the grid pattern of South Boston, park circulation and the reservoir (Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities).

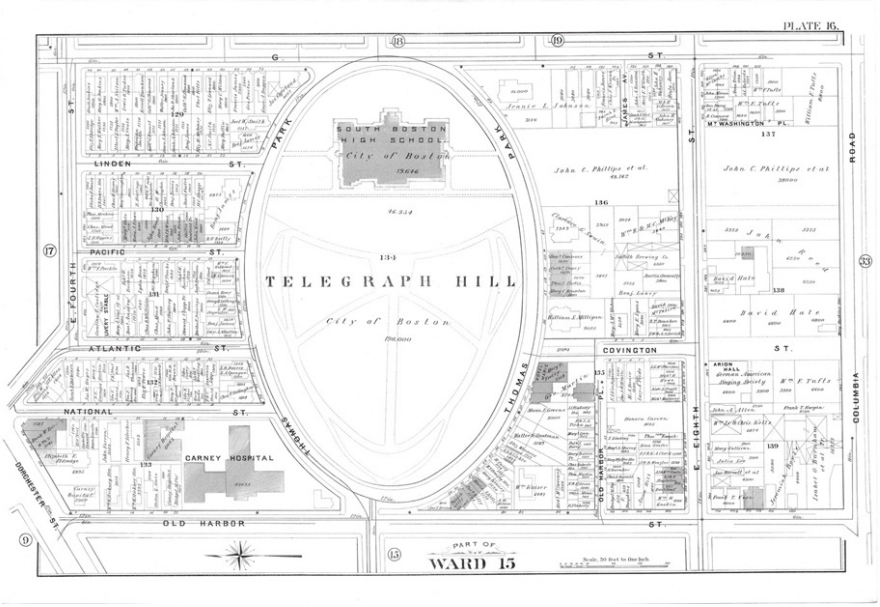


Figure 5. Plan of Dorchester Heights from 1899, showing a configuration of paths similar to current conditions, as well as the newly constructed South Boston High School. The Dorchester Heights Monument has yet to be constructed (Suffolk County of Deeds).

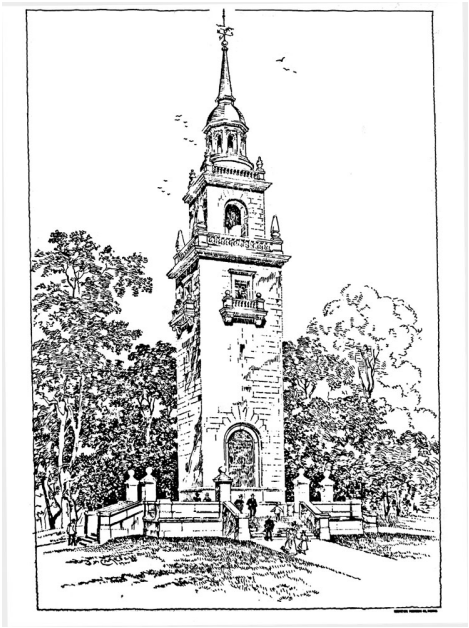


Figure 6. 1900 drawing of the Dorchester Heights Monument done by the firm of Peabody and Stearns, published in American Architect and Building News (Boston Public Library, Fine Arts Division).



Figure 7. View of the Dorchester Heights monument from South Boston High School. Photo was taken between 1901 and 1905, prior to the installation of the fence around the base of the monument (Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Collection).

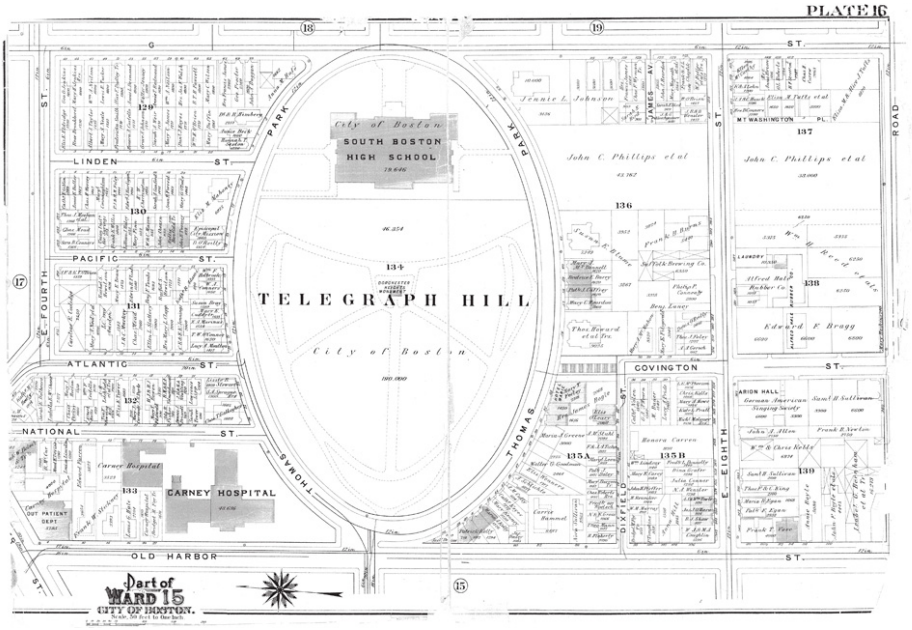


Figure 8. Plan of Dorchester Heights from 1910, showing the recently constructed monument, the South Boston High School, and the path configuration (Suffolk County of Deeds).



Figure 9. Image from early 20th century shows the use of the park for recreation (Boston Public Library, Prints Division).

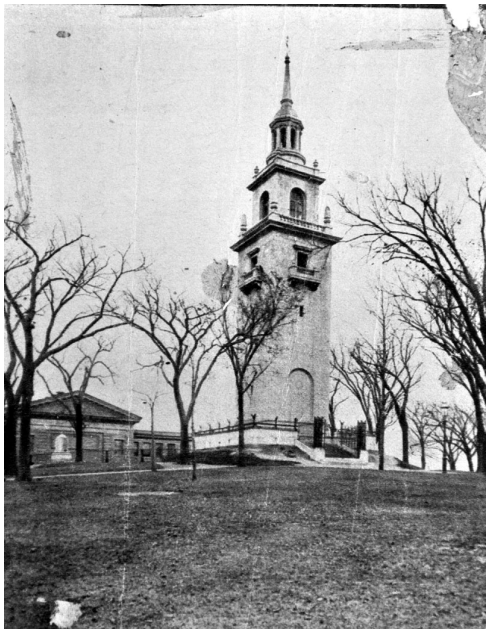


Figure 10. A post-1905 newspaper clipping of the Dorchester Heights Monument showing allees of trees along the walkways and grassy slopes surrounding the monument as well as the fence around the monument base (Boston Public Library, Fine Arts Division).

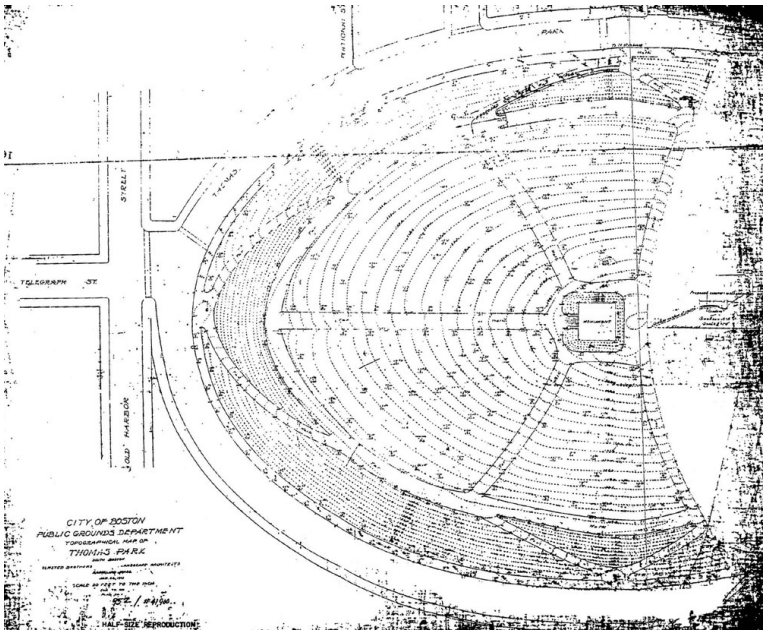


Figure 11. Topographical map from the 1913 survey of Dorchester Heights done by the Olmsted Brothers (National Park Service, Denver Service Center).



Figure 12. A 1925 aerial photograph of Dorchester Heights that shows spatial organization of the site within the surrounding neighborhood (Boston Public Library, Prints Division).



Figure 13. A 1938 Evacuation Day Commemoration in front of the 1876 Centennial Monument at Dorchester Heights (Boston Public Library, Prints Division).

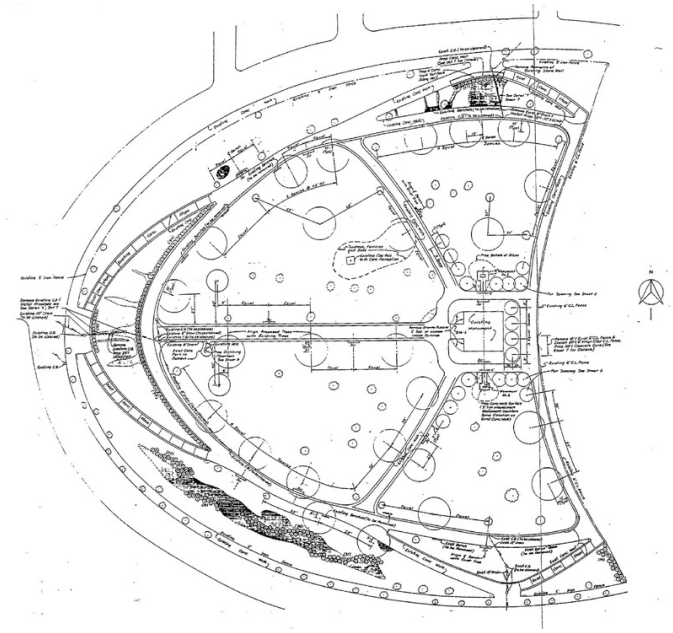


Figure 14. The 1968 plan for Dorchester Heights done by Vollmer Associates. Note the large number of non-historic plantings, particularly on the southern slope (National Park Service, Denver Service Center).

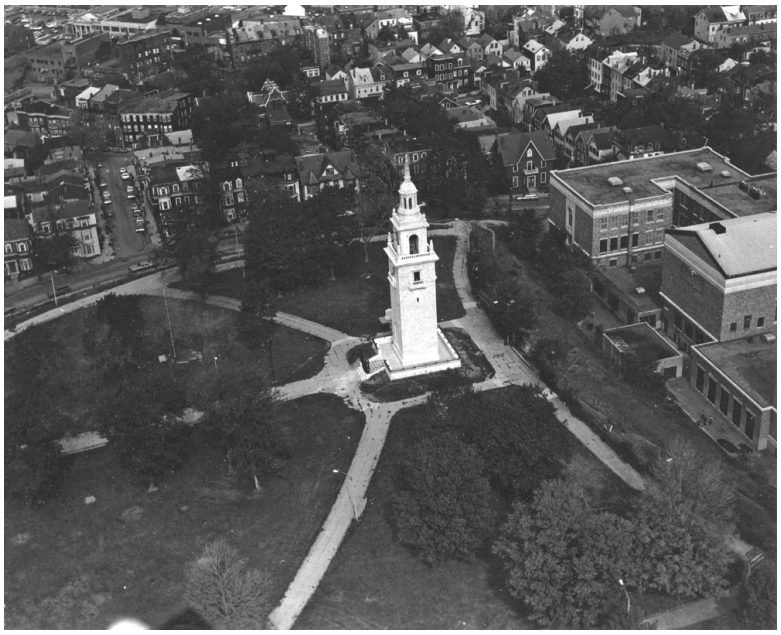


Figure 15. A 1977 aerial photograph of Dorchester Heights. Cobra-style lighting and vegetation in sidewalk cracks can both be seen (Boston National Historical Park).

Uses

Functions and Uses:

Major Category	Category	Use/Function	Historic	Current	Primary
Defense	Fortification	Battery (Defense)	Yes	No	Yes
Industrial/Processing/Extraction	Water Works	Water Storage Facility	Yes	No	No
Landscape	Plaza/Public Space (Square)	Urban Park	Yes	Yes	No
Landscape	Scenic Landscape	Vista	Yes	Yes	No
Recreation/Culture	Monument (Marker, Plaque)	Monument (Marker, Plaque)	No	Yes	Yes
Recreation/Culture	Outdoor Recreation	Outdoor Recreation	Yes	Yes	No

Public Access:

Public Access: Unrestricted

Public Access Narrative:

Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is open year-round, however access to the interior of the Monument is restricted to only a few days a year.

Associated Ethnographic Group

Ethnographic Study Status: No Survey Conducted

Ethnographic Narrative:

Analysis & Evaluation of Integrity

Analysis and Evaluation of Integrity Narrative Summary:

Significant landscape characteristics identified for the Dorchester Heights National Historic Site include topography, spatial organization, views and vistas, vegetation, circulation, buildings and structures, small-scale features, and archeology. Many of these characteristics contribute to the historical character and integrity of the site, however some of the features are either non-contributing or undetermined.

The physical integrity of Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is assessed based on how the site's present conditions compare to those during the periods of significance (March 1776, May 1776 to 1815, 1847 to 1853, 1877 to 1927). Research conducted for this CLI indicates that many of the site's landscape characteristics and features present at the end of the period of significance (1927) are still intact. The glacial drumlin that served as the site of strategic fortifications twice in 1776 and again 1814, and then transformed into a park in the 1850s, is still present. The 100-foot brick and stone masonry Dorchester Heights Monument tower, built in 1901-1902 to commemorate the site's military history, remains as a visual landmark for the site and neighborhood. While some views to the surrounding neighborhood from the base of the Monument has changed over time, the top of the monument structure still provides full 360-degree views to Boston. Historic views into the site and the tower are also still possible from some of the streets that converge at the site. The configuration of the site's curvilinear paths and lawn panels dotted with trees are essentially unchanged. Other features that remain from the historical period include two smaller commemorative monuments (1876 Centennial and Henry Knox) and a perimeter fence.

Since 1927, a variety of trees have been added including crabapple, cherry, green and white ash, and pin oak, although overall there are fewer trees at the site since the end of the historic period. Major site renovations in 1995-1997 included the installation of the retaining walls, stairs, and ramps to improve accessibility and to stabilize the park's steep hills. Some of these projects rebuilt walls and stairs installed in the 1940s. Other features that have been added since the historical period include the 1982 Allied War Veterans Monument, National Park Service signage, benches, trash receptacles, lighting, irrigation boxes, and utility boxes. Today, Dorchester Heights National Historic Site retains greater overall integrity for its later periods of significance as a park and commemorative site than it does for the Revolutionary War periods.

ASPECTS OF INTEGRITY

The National Register identifies seven aspects of integrity (location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association) by which a cultural landscape is evaluated. Retention of some of these qualities is essential for a property to convey its historical significance, although not all seven aspects need be present to convey a sense of past time and place. Using these criteria, much of the site's physical integrity relates more to later periods of significance as a park and commemorative site than to the Revolutionary War periods.

For the first two periods of significance, March 4-17, 1776, and May 1776 to 1815, the Dorchester Heights National Historic Site retains integrity of location and association. Although the topography and landforms at Dorchester Heights and the Boston Harbor have undergone changes, the site's physical location in and its topographic vantage above the Boston Harbor, city, and land below remains the same. Integrity of association is also retained through the Dorchester Heights Monument, and other smaller monuments and commemorative plaques. Integrity of design, materials, workmanship, setting, and feeling have not been retained as there are no above ground physical remains of the fortifications and there has been extensive land filling of the harbor and urban expansion of the city (CLR 1993:172,177).

For the period of significance from 1847 to 1853, Dorchester Heights National Historic Site retains integrity in location, design, setting, feeling, and association. The site's location remains the same. According to the Hopkins Atlas of 1874-1876 and the pre-1881 City of Boston Surveyor Map, the design of Thomas Park has remained consistent, that of a simple layout with curvilinear paths converging on the focal point (initially a flagpole, and by 1902 the tower) at the top of the hill. Although the setting has changed due to the infill of additional residences and buildings, it retains the historic integrity because of the neighborhood's important role in the formation of Thomas Park for the improvement of public health and welfare. Integrity of feeling is still present for the aesthetic and historic sense of the site as a neighborhood park with simple plantings, provided

as an amenity for improved quality of life and a place for passive recreation. Integrity of association is also present, as Thomas Park represents the sanitary reform movement (reservoir and park) and the small park movement (park), and was one of Boston's first parks. Materials and workmanship have changed in the form of building materials and small-scale features used throughout the site, as well as the change to concrete path surfaces and plant materials (CLR 1993:177-178).

For the period of significance from 1877 to 1927, the site retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. As with the other historic periods of significance, the site's location is unchanged. The historic design is also retained through the site's layout and curvilinear paths that still exist. The site's setting continues to be that of a residential area, even though the urban context has expanded. Materials for this period of significance are still present primarily through the Dorchester Heights Monument tower, as well as the 1876 Centennial Monument and the Henry Knox Monument. Although the trees on the site are not historic, the landscape treatment of simple plantings of grass and trees remains the same. Workmanship is evident, particularly for the Dorchester Heights Monument and the surrounding terrace and fence. Feeling and association are also still present as the site still functions as a neighborhood park and commemorates its Revolutionary War history (CLR 1993:179).

The following section presents an analysis of landscape characteristics and their associated features and corresponding List of Classified Structures names and numbers, if applicable. It also includes an evaluation of whether the feature contributes to the property's National Register eligibility for the historic period (March 1776, May 1776 to 1815, 1847 to 1853, 1877 to 1927), contributes to the property's historic character, or if it is noncontributing, undetermined, or managed as a cultural resource.

Landscape Characteristic: Topography

Historic Conditions (through 1927):
Before it was altered by cutting and filling, Boston and its surroundings were dominated geologically by the numerous drumlins created by the glaciers. Over the course of its expansion and development, most of Boston's drumlins were either completely leveled or greatly reduced in height in order to make better building sites and to create fill to expand the city's narrow peninsula. Despite the great changes that have occurred over time to the natural topography of Dorchester Heights, it is one of the few drumlins in greater Boston that is still recognizable (CLR 1993:5).

Boston's drumlins, at least those in strategic positions close to the harbor, were logical places for fortifications to be erected during the Revolutionary War. Plans from 1776-1846 indicate the twin hills or knolls at the present location of Dorchester Heights National Historic Site with other hills indicated at various locations on Dorchester Neck (see Figure 3). Additional fortifications, on Dorchester Heights and elsewhere on Boston Harbor, were built in preparation for the War of 1812 but were never needed for defensive purposes (CLR 1993:71).

When Boston undertook a complete modem water system in 1846, drumlins were again the logical places on which to place reservoirs. The South Boston Reservoir, built in 1849 just east of Dorchester Heights, was built on one of the high-points of South Boston, but construction of the reservoir altered the topography of the hill through cutting and filling, lowering the crest of the drumlin more than six feet. After going out of service in 1872, the Boston Reservoir was removed in 1899 to create space for the South Boston High School. The removal of the reservoir changed the topography again, creating a steep slope on the eastern side of the park where part of the reservoir embankment remained (CLR 1993:5). The 1913 Olmsted Brother's Survey shows the elevation at the Dorchester Heights Monument as +/- 137, based on calculations taken at tide marsh, which differed from the 1868 elevation, measured at 148.36 feet. The tide marsh is believed to be the reason behind the ten-foot difference (CLR 1993:82).

Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:
Some of the site's topography was changed in 1940 when extensive grading was undertaken on the lower sloped portion of the site to accommodate the addition of stairs and walls, allowing for easier access to the park. The stairs and walkways typically include a retaining wall on the uphill side with another lower wall on the downhill side to retain soil below the walk. A 1951 plan showed similar grading. However, by 1980, a site plan was prepared showing proposals to alleviate erosion and drainage problems caused by the earlier plans (CLR 1993:82,86,89,119).

Additional survey work in 1992 revealed that the site's fill areas, especially on the east and west sides of the hill, were showing signs of slumping (CLR 1993:120). Site renovations undertaken between 1995 and 1997 attempted to remedy the continuing slope creep. Special consideration was paid to the relationship between the altered topography and the installation of new retaining walls to avoid past problems (Figure 16). Topography was also changed to improve accessibility through the construction of ramps with more gradual slopes, and to allow for easier maintenance access (Interview, Ruth Raphael, 2010).

Over ten years after this construction work was completed on Dorchester Heights, some of the old problems are beginning to resurface again. Slope creep is causing settling of the stairs and movement of the retaining wall. Patches of eroded areas can be seen in a number of areas on the site, particularly on the lower slopes (Figure 17).

The topographical form of Dorchester Heights and Thomas Park is one of the most significant aspects of this historic landscape, which has remained essentially unchanged since the earliest topographical survey in 1913 and probably since the park's initial construction (CLR 1993: 119).

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Slopes	146037	Contributing					No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 16. View looking southeast at some of the steep slopes, with South Boston High School in the background (OCLP 2010).



Figure 17. Slope on the southern side of the site showing signs of erosion (OCLP 2010).

Landscape Characteristic: Spatial Organization

Historic Conditions (through 1927):
While the Algonquin Native American tribe, and later English settlers, occupied the Dorchester area, little is known about the organization of land atop Dorchester Heights prior to the events of 1776. At that time, a series of fortifications were built on the twin hills at Dorchester Heights from which to engage the British troops (those structures discussed in more detail under Buildings and Structures). Despite the British evacuation, several forts were built at Dorchester Heights, including a star-shaped fort on Telegraph Hill to help protect the area from further British aggression. The embankments gradually faded away until structures built to hold canons were erected in association with the War of 1812. In the years that followed, these features also deteriorated though some of the embankments remained visible.

Thomas Park was developed in the 1850s atop Telegraph Hill. Walks were laid out axially from the site's focal point at the top of the hill, a flagpole, and approaches were made to it from various locations along the carriage road encircling the park in an elliptical loop. The flagpole was later replaced by the 100-foot-tall Peabody and Stearns monument. Two small monuments were later located symmetrically about the main monument (CLR 1993:120).

Post-historic and Existing Conditions:
The existing spatial organization and design of Thomas Park remains remarkably similar to that shown in the 1875 G.M. Hopkins Atlas of Suffolk County, and the pre-1881 Boston Surveyor's Map (CLR 1993:120). Today, the formal layout and symmetry of the park creates clear and simple spatial organizations and views. The upper area has moderate slopes within the main elliptical loop and is the primary space within the park oriented towards the monument, the focal point at the highest point of the park. The radial symmetry of the paths also reinforces an equal outward orientation from the park to views of the surrounding neighborhood, city, and harbor. The steeply sloped area below the perimeter of the main elliptical loop is essentially unusable and serves only for circulation (CLR 1993:120).

Landscape Characteristic: Views and Vistas

Historic Conditions (through 1927):
Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is located approximately two miles south/south-east of Downtown Boston. As one of the high points in the area, Dorchester Heights offered commanding views to both the City of Boston and the Boston Harbor, making it a strategic location to hold during the Revolutionary War. In the early 1850s, Stephen Tucker, Superintendent of Public Lands for the City of Boston, prepared a plan for Thomas Park in Dorchester Heights, with the intent of creating panoramic views from the site. Views to and from the site were further enhanced with the construction of the Dorchester Heights Monument in 1901.

Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:
From the elevated height of the drumlin, the park offers a variety of views of Boston and its surroundings. Though some sightlines are obstructed by either surrounding buildings or vegetation, a majority of views are still intact. Views to the north/northwest look towards the Financial District, while the west/northwest views look toward the John Hancock building and the rest of the Back Bay buildings (Figure 18). To the west and south are views of Roxbury and Old Harbor, respectively. The view to the east is blocked by South Boston High School, but to the north/northeast there are sightlines to the Boston Inner Harbor and East Boston. Even more panoramic views are possible from the top of the monument, but the tower is only open to visitors during special events and during limited hours seasonally.

From the surrounding streets, there are a number of sightlines into the site. Telegraph Street, National Street, Atlantic Street, Pacific Street, Linden Street, and East Sixth Street all end perpendicular to Thomas Park (the street encircling Dorchester Heights). Of these, Telegraph Street offers the best view into the site: it offers a clear sightline to the monument and the surrounding slopes (Figure 19). The other streets, with the exceptions of Linden Street and East Sixth Street, offer views into the site, but do not frame the monument. Views from Linden and East Sixth Street are obstructed by South Boston High School.

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Views from Thomas Park	146039	Contributing					No
Views from Top of the Dorchester Heights Monument	146041	Contributing					No
Views from Surrounding Streets into Site	146043	Contributing					No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 18. View from the base of the Dorchester Heights Monument looking northwest towards the Financial District (OCLP 2010).



Figure 19. View of Dorchester Heights looking up Telegraph Street into the western entry (OCLP 2010).

Landscape Characteristic: Vegetation

Historic Conditions (through 1927):
The native vegetation on Dorchester Heights is believed to have been an oak-hickory forest, which was cleared during the seventeenth century by colonists to use the lumber for building material and firewood. The cleared land was then used for pasturage. In the eighteenth century, when more substantial houses began to be built, the usage of the land shifted to farming, and a number of orchards were planted on the eastern and western ends of the peninsula. In 1776, some of the wood from these orchards was used to create the abates, a defensive structure formed from felled trees bundled together and then placed in front of the fortifications to create an obstacle (ARCH 1998:5; CLR 1993:9).

When construction began on Thomas Park in 1852, Thomas Park Street was planted with linden trees. Photographs from the 1870s, show the plantings within the park as allèes of trees along the paved walks (CLR 1993:69, ARCH 1998:26). The Olmsted Brothers survey from 1913 is the first plan of the park to show labeled vegetation. The plan shows that the upper paths of the park were lined with mature elms (Ulmus americana), Norway maples (Acer platanoides), sugar maples (Acer saccharum), and lindens (Tilia spp.). The plan also indicates numerous smaller trees planted within the interior turf panels. The large-caliper trees along the pathways were planted sometime around 1870. The vegetative cover on the slopes and upper terraces continued to be grass (CLR 1993:191).

Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:
In 1964, seventy-five Father Hugo roses (Rosa hugonis) were planted on the site, both as a deterrent to vandalism and as a method of concealing minor defacement when it occurred. Based on a1968 plan prepared by Vollmer Associates, additional plantings on the site, including small trees such as quince and crabapples, were installed. A 1979 site inventory showed a number of new plants including a row of six Callery pears (Pyrus calleryana) and one red oak (Quercus rubra) on the northwest upper perimeter path, as well as seven pears along the southern upper perimeter walkway. Other tree species on the inventory included two lindens, four elms (Ulmus spp.), two Norway maples, an additional Callery pear, as well as crabapples (Malus spp.), quince (Cydonia oblonga), maples, and pin oaks (Quercus palustris) that were located on the southern slope. When compared to an existing conditions map in the 1993 CLR, a number of trees were mislabeled or incorrectly identified on the 1979 inventory plan (CLR 1993:89-90, HSR 1993:33).

A 1992 survey of the site noted the continued existence of the same large shade trees on the upper terrace that were documented during the 1913 Olmsted survey. These trees included sugar maples, Norway maples, white ash, green ash and American elms, most of which were reported in good condition with the exception of the elms which were deteriorating due to Dutch Elm disease. There was also a variety of plantings on the south slope, including those indicated on the 1979 site inventory, such as crabapple, pin oak, American elm, European linden (Tilia cordata), and black cherry (Prunus serafina). The plantings along Thomas Park Street included large caliper linden trees that could be traced back to 1958; however, the trees had been severely pruned to prevent interference with overhead wires. The vegetation on the terrace and slopes of the site continued to be grass, although it was reported in poor condition due to lack of irrigation during the summer months, slope creep, and erosion problems (CLR 1993:146).

During the 1995 to 1997 renovations, a number of missing large shade trees were replaced with allee-style plantings of sugar maple and red oak along the paths of the upper lawns (Figure 20). Some earlier plantings remain: four maple trees on the northern-upper lawn, as well as two ash trees, three maples on the southern-upper lawn, and one linden on the lower southern lawn. Other changes in vegetation on site include the removal of the linden trees along Thomas Park Street, and their replacement with honeylocust trees (Gleditsia tricanthos) in order to provide a more open canopy around the utility lines. Additionally, shrubs have been planted at the top of each of the eastern staircases to provide a safety barrier at the steep drop off at the end of the walkway (Review Comments, Ruth Raphael, 21 June 2010).

The eastern border of Thomas Park is shared with South Boston High School and is separated by a 6' wrought iron fence that was installed during the 1997 renovation. On the school side of the fence, the vegetation lacks any particular design and is planted with a variety of maples, elms, and ashes (Fraxinus spp.) that create a dense canopy (Figure 21). Also on the city-owned property is a series of gardens that were begun by local artist Michael Dowling and continue to be designed and maintained through the Medicine Wheel Youth Program, a private non-profit organization providing paid intership to local youth. A new native plant garden was added in 2010 as a partnership with the National Park Service and Medicine Wheel through the National Park Foundation's First Bloom program (Review Comments, Ruth Raphael, 21 June 2010).

The lawn area of the park can be classified into two main areas: the upper lawn and the steep sloped sides. The upper lawn is currently in fair condition. The turf on the southwestern upper terrace is a patchy. The use of the site for dog-walking has also diminished the quality of the grass. The steep slopes all exhibit evidence of erosion. While erosion-control measures have been implemented and grass covers a majority of the slopes, there remain some problem areas. On the southern slope behind the retaining wall, areas of soil can be seen where water runoff has washed away portions of the turf.

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Pre-1927 Shade Trees (on 1913 Olmsted Plan)	146059	Contributing			Asset	1025494	No
Upper Lawn	146065	Contributing			Asset	394987	No
Grass Slopes	146067	Contributing			Asset	394987	No
Post-1927 Shade Trees	146069	Noncontributing – Compatible			Asset	1025499	No
Shrubs	146071	Noncontributing – Compatible			Asset	1025501	No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 20. View of allee along sidewalk on the upper lawn of the southern side (OCLP 2010).

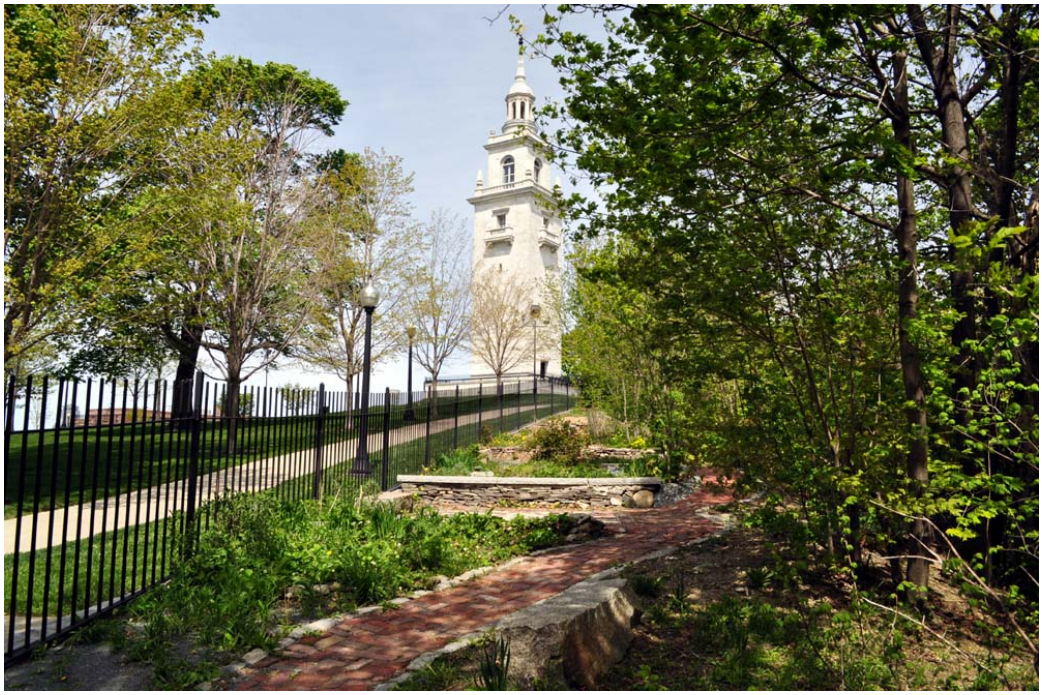


Figure 21. Plantings on bordering the site in the area behind the high school known as "No Man's Land" (OCLP 2010).

Landscape Characteristic: Circulation

Historic Conditions (through 1927):
Before the building of the fortifications occurred on Telegraph Hill, there were ten to twelve houses on the Dorchester Peninsula, connected to the mainland and the meetinghouse road by a road that led to the Dorchester Turnpike. On March 4-5, 1776, there were several paths the militia may have used in order to complete the fortification construction atop the hill.

In 1805, a local surveyor, Mather Withington, began a plan for laying out streets in a grid pattern after Dorchester Heights became part of Boston. Due to the problems that the terrain of Dorchester Heights presented, he neglected to delineate streets in the area bounded by East 4th Street, G Street, East 8th Street, and Old Harbor Street. Telegraph Street (which now offers one of the best views into the site) was an original part of that plan, and additional streets were added over time. Other streets were proposed to cut through the site, but not implemented due to the problems that the slopes in this area presented (CLR 1993:28, National Register 2001, Sec.8:8). The 1874-1876 G.M. Hopkins atlas illustrates the street layout around Thomas Park.

The 1874-1876 G.M. Hopkins plan is also the first to show the site's circulation system of paths leading to a flagpole at the top of the hill from various points along Thomas Street that encircled the site. A change in the circulation system occurred when the path around the reservoir was removed, presumably when South Boston High School was built in 1899 (CLR 1993:71,120).

All walks in Thomas Park were originally cinder, but by the time of the 1913 Olmsted Brothers survey, they were listed as being tar. The perimeter sidewalks along Thomas Street were brick. The 1913 survey shows a construction section for a proposed concrete walk and curb on the north side, while a 1901 photo shows expansion joints in the path and paved swales (CLR 1993:82,125).

Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:
The configuration of the circulation paths through the site is essentially unchanged since the historic period, although the materials have changed. The 1940 plan recommended all walks be replaced by concrete, and this appears to have been completed by 1951. Stairs were installed at various times between 1940 and 1968 (CLR 1993:86,125,152).

In the renovations between 1995 and 1997, the redesign focused on improving accessibility to the site, resulting in the lengthening of some of the ramps to decrease the slope. This changed the geometry of the paths slightly, but retained the original symmetry.

Today, the paths throughout the park are concrete, and are mostly in good condition, with some areas of concrete spall. The following is a general description of each individual walk, stair, and ramp section:

Main Loop Walk
The main loop walk creates a u-shape around the park, connecting all of the paths to one another and separating the upper terrace area from the steep side slopes (Figure 22). This path is typically in good condition. It is approximately twelve feet wide, though it widens in the places where it meets the ramps. In one place on the southern side, the sidewalk has settled, presumably due to the freeze-thaw cycle, creating a small valley. There are eight benches and two trash receptacles located directly on the main loop walk (CLR 1993:125).

Main Walk on East to West Axis
The main walk extends from the Dorchester Heights Monument to the main loop walk, going directly along the east to west axis (Figure 23). This walk is about twelve feet wide and has four benches, one trash receptacle and a drinking fountain located directly on the path. The walk is not currently showing signs of advanced concrete spall, or joint separation and has little damage other than ordinary wear (CLR 1993:129).

North and South Radial Walks
These slightly ramped walks radiate from the Dorchester Heights Monument to the main loop walk, and are both approximately ten feet wide. Each side has two benches and a trash receptacle placed directly on the path. The walk is not currently showing signs of advanced concrete spall, or joint separation and has little damage other than ordinary wear (CLR 1993:129).

North-South Walk along High School Fence
This walk runs north to south along the high school fence, connecting the two ends of the main loop walk. The path is approximately eight feet wide, is not currently showing signs of advanced concrete spall, or joint separation, and has little damage other than ordinary wear (CLR 1993:129).

North and South Ramps
These ramps both provide access from the Thomas Park Street to the main loop walk. The ramp on the western side of the southern entrance is showing a number of problems. Separation has occurred between the inner retaining wall and ramp, resulting in a 1” gap. The other side of the ramp against the outer retaining wall is not currently exhibiting that issue. The ramp is also experiencing concrete spall in a few areas, particularly around the drains located approximately every twenty feet along the length of the ramp. This ramp on the north side of the park is in a similar condition to the other one. There is separation occurring between the inner retaining wall and the ramp, as well as concrete spall around the drainage areas, particularly around the storm drain at the base of the ramp, and up at the very top of the ramp (Figure 24). The concrete landing at the base of the ramp has large cracks forming around the expansion joints (CLR 1993:129).

Western Stairs
The two staircases at the western entrance to the park flank a retaining wall, with one set of stairs on the northern side, and the other on the southern side. As a result of slope creep, the stairs on both sides of the wall are beginning to separate from the inner retaining wall, creating a 1-2” gap (Figure 25). The stairs are also beginning to settle on the side attached to the outer retaining wall. When they settled, the stairs separated from the mortar joints, leaving them in the original location, creating an unsightly outline two inches above where the stairs currently sit (CLR 1993:152).

Northeast and Southeast Stairs
The set of stairs to the east of the southern entrance do not exhibit the problems with separating and settling that is seen on the western stairs. They are in good condition, but have become a gathering place for leaves and garbage. The stairs at the northern entrance are in a similar condition to the southern stairs, with no evidence of separating or settling. However, there was not nearly the amount of litter accumulated on this set of stairs, as on the southern one (Figure 26) (CLR 1993:152).

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Walks	146199	Contributing			Asset	1008254	No
Stairs	146201	Noncontributing – Compatible			Asset	1008256	Yes
Ramps	146203	Noncontributing – Compatible					No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 22. View of main loop walk on the southern side of the site, and the view to the Back Bay area (OCLP 2010).



Figure 23. View of the main allee leading to the monument, looking to the west (OCLP 2010).



Figure 24. View looking west at of ramp on the northern side of the site. Note the concrete spall at the base of the ramp (OCLP 2010).

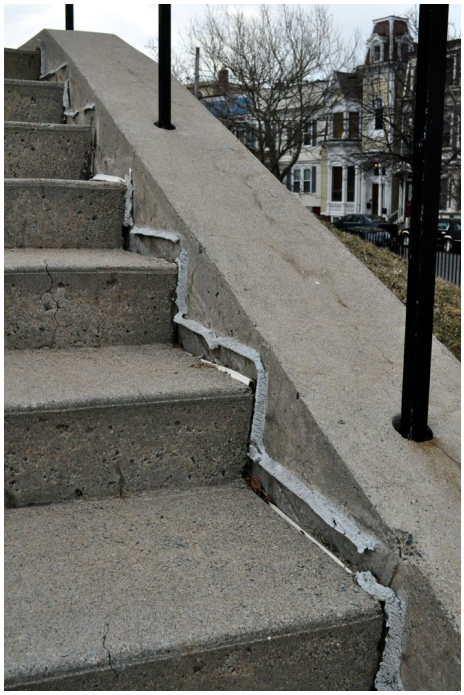


Figure 25. Stairs on the southern side of the western park entrance showing the effects of slope creep on the stairs and retaining walls (OCLP 2010).



Figure 26. View of stairs on the southern side of the site, looking east(OCLP 2010).

Landscape Characteristic: Buildings and Structures

Historic Conditions (through 1927):
Just prior to the Revolutionary War, there were approximately ten houses in the Dorchester Peninsula, six of which were near the northeastern base of Telegraph Hill. The majority of these buildings were burned to the ground by British soldiers in February 1776. A month later, the Americans erected fortifications atop Telegraph Hill. In March 1776, the structures consisted of a long wall of chandeliers, believed to be similar to the single, long embankment seen on the 1877 Pelham plan. In May 1776, structures included the star-shaped fort located on Telegraph Hill as well as a four-pointed fort was on the hill just to the east (Bird Hill). The star-shaped fort remained in various stages of decay until construction of Thomas Park began (CLR 1993:72). After the refortification of Dorchester Heights in May 1776, there were eighteen buildings shown on Dorchester Peninsula. Six of buildings were on the hills of Dorchester Heights, two of which were located in the swale between the hills (ARCH 1998:8).

The Dorchester Heights Monument Tower was constructed in 1901 and designed by Peabody and Stearns (Figure 27). The tower was designed in the Georgian Classical Revival style, and rises in three stages. The first stage is relatively plain, with vertically slit windows on each face of the building, aligned with the interior staircase. At the top of the first stage are a series of doors (one on each face) that open out onto small balcony areas cantilevered off the structure. The second stage has, on each face, an unembellished arched window opening. The tower is topped by an octagonal arcaded cupola on top of a circular drum, domed roof, and gilded weathervane. Steps immediately around the monument were built in 1902, and an iron fence was added in 1906 (CLR 1993:57; National Register 1981, Sec.7).

There were no retaining walls around Thomas Park during the historic period, but the 1913 plan indicates several catch basins (CLR 1993:82).

Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:
In the 1950s and 1960s, vertical and horizontal tie rods were installed in the tower in attempt to slow movement and cracking of the upper structure. Between 1972 and 1982, the tower was restored (LCS 2010). Between 1940 and 1968, concrete retaining walls were added to portions of Thomas Park. They were rebuilt in the renovations between 1995 and 1997. The existing walls at Dorchester Heights National Historic Site are all reinforced concrete (Figure 28) (CLR 1993:90).

As part of the 1995 rehabilitation of the property, irrigation was added to the site. Also, the drainage functions of the site were improved when the walks, stairs, walls and ramps were rebuilt. Catch basins were installed at the base of the slopes and foot of the stairs, and drains were built into the stairs and ramps (CLR 1993:152).

Features with an * are described in the National Register.

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Dorchester Heights – Monument (Tower) *	146205	Contributing	40089		Location	60517	Yes
Catch Basins	146207	Contributing					No
Concrete Retaining Walls	146209	Noncontributing – Compatible			Asset	1008268	Yes

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 27. View of the Dorchester Heights Monument, built in 1901 (OCLP 2010).



Figure 28. View of the southern retaining wall which contains an informational panel about Dorchester Heights and Thomas Park (OCLP 2010).

Landscape Characteristic: Small Scale Features

Historic Conditions (through 1927):

Monuments

The 1876 Centennial Monument, a granite piece, is located approximately 32' north of the main monument, and is approximately 6 feet tall, in a rectangular shape with a concave-curved pyramidal top, with three cannonballs placed at the peak (Figure 29). It was originally installed in 1877, in the western portion of the site, and then later moved north of the tower (CLR 1993:130,135). In 1927, the Henry Knox Monument was installed just south of the Dorchester Heights Monument Tower (Figure 30). This monument was a 4'-tall, tombstone-shaped marker, approximately 1'-deep with rough carved edges. A smooth face of the marker faces the monument and bears an inscription describing Henry Knox's role in bringing the cannons from the Fort Ticonderoga, which led to the evacuation of the British from Boston (CLR 1993:130,135).

Benches

One of the earliest photographs of Thomas Park, taken around 1877, showed a number of new, light-colored, backless benches along the central walk. Photographs taken in 1901 when the monument was completed showed a different bench than was seen in 1877. Instead of the backless benches, there were portable wooden "seatee"-type benches along the walks. However, it was not until the Olmsted Brothers survey in 1913 that a plan showed bench locations throughout the site. At the time the survey was done, there were twenty-four benches on the site (CLR 1993:57,82).

Fences

Before construction on Thomas Park began, a lithograph approximately dated to 1850 or 1851 shows early fencing on the site. A post and rail fence ran between the still existing fortification and the presumed reservoir area, probably put up as a safety precaution. Another fence, this one a split-rail fence in poor condition, is seen running along the possible parade grounds of the fortification. About a year after the lithograph was produced, an iron fence was installed around the site when Thomas Park was opened, including a segment that separated the park area from the reservoir. The fencing remained in place until it was removed in 1881 due to poor condition. However, the 1901 photo shows iron fencing around the lower perimeter walkway along Thomas Park Street, leading to the conclusion that it was either never removed, or was removed, stored and then re-installed on the site. Also shown in this photo are bollards or rail posts possibly connected by heavy wire on the steep paths (CLR 1993:22,49,82).

Flagpole

The flagpole was originally located at the current location of the monument, as seen on the 1874 Hopkins Atlas Map and the 1899 street plan. It was moved during the monument construction to its current location, where it was documented on the 1913 Olmsted Brothers survey (CLR 1993:135).

Lighting

Photos from 1901 and 1920 show gas lights consistent with placement on the 1913 Olmsted survey, which indicated sixteen gaslights across the park. The 1901 photo also shows a network of overhead wires across the hill, as well as the poles to which the wires connected (CLR 1993:82).

Drinking Fountain

Between 1900 and 1905, after the completion of the Thomas Park storm drain system, a drinking fountain was installed at the western end of the central walk. On the 1913 Olmsted Brothers survey, a drinking fountain is indicated in that same place. An exact date of installation or removal has yet to be discovered (CLR 1993:60,203).

Bollards

A photograph from 1901 showed bollards or rail posts possibly connected by heavy wire on the steep paths (CLR 1993:82,139).

Post-Historic and Existing Conditions:

Monuments

In 1968, the Centennial and Henry Knox monuments were adjusted to be precisely on axis with the monument and equidistant away. In the park's List of Classified Structures, the 1876 Centennial Monument was assessed as being in good condition in 2005 and the Henry Knox Monument was listed as fair.

The Allied War Veterans Monument was installed on the site in 1982 (Figure 31). This granite monument is located on the north of the central path, near the western end of the park. The monument was dedicated in honor of the South Boston citizens who had served in the allied wars. It has an undulated top and displays seals from various branches of the United States military. This monument is in good condition (CLR 1993:130,135).

Benches

Exact bench locations are not shown on the 1940 Boston Parks plan, but notes indicate "New 10.0 concrete seats along walks" on both sides of the upper slope. A 1968 plan done by Vollmer Associates, Inc. proposed the removal and replacement of the site benches. The benches installed consisted of four pre-cast concrete supports, with wooden slats creating the seat and back of the bench. NPS details from 1980 show a section of that bench, and proposes repairs and painting for several benches. These new benches were likely on the site until the renovations of 1995-1997, as they also remained in the same location from the 1968 plan to the 1992 survey, and were detailed in the 1980 NPS survey. The 1992 survey reported that the benches were in good condition, with some areas of damage in the concrete supports and decay of the wooden slats (CLR 1993:86,89,135).

Ten benches are currently located throughout the site. The bench frame is comprised of two 'L' shaped, black, wrought iron ends with thirteen wooden slats connecting the two. All benches are approximately four feet in length, and although slightly weathered, are in good condition. These benches are in a different position than indicated in the 1993 Cultural Landscape Report. The benches, placed on the site in the 1995-1997 renovations, are not historic, but are in keeping with the historical character of the site.

Fences

Fencing is not noted on the Olmsted survey of 1913 or the 1940 Boston Parks plan, but references to the repairs required on the iron fence are noted on the 1940 plan. Major repairs and repainting were proposed for the fence in again in 1980 by the NPS. The survey done in 1992, reported that the alignment of the fence was off in several places due to movement of the post footings, sidewalk, and slope, which required bracing in some areas. This study also commented that repainting and repair of the fence was needed. In 1951, a chainlink fence was installed along the eastern perimeter of the site, separating Thomas Park from South Boston High School. It remained on the site until it was replaced with a wrought iron fence in the renovations from 1995-1997 (CLR 1993:86,89).

The 6' black wrought iron fence runs around the perimeter of the park along the sidewalk at Thomas Park Street, supported by a pair of granite endposts flanking each of the entrances (Figure 32). The fence was evaluated as being in good condition in the List of Classified Structures in 2005. A 6' wrought iron fence runs north to south along the eastern perimeter of the site, separating Thomas Park from South Boston High School. The fenceposts are set into a granite base, and both the base and fence are in good condition. It is similar in appearance to the perimeter fence (CLR 1993:138).

Flagpole

The flagpole features a 50-foot aluminum pole set into a concrete footing and is in good condition (Figure 33). It has been located in the same place since the 1913 Olmsted Brothers survey. Both the 1941 Parks and Recreation Department Plan and the 1968 Vollmer plan indicate the flagpole in its present location (CLR 1993:135).

Lighting

The lighting at Dorchester Heights was replaced prior to the 1978 Schoenfeld plan, which indicated a series of 'cobra'-style lights on the site. The lighting on the site now consists of 43 'acorn-style' lights installed as part of the renovations of 1995-1997 (Figure 34). The majority of the light posts are in good condition; however, a few are showing signs of rust around the base. While not historic, they are in keeping with the park's pastoral setting. There are also two spotlights that illuminate the monument. There were originally four, but two were removed at an unknown time due to weak bases (CLR 1993:193).

Drinking Fountain
The drinking fountain that was noted on the 1913 Olmsted Brothers survey was removed at an unknown date. It was replaced during the 1995-1997 renovations with a new fountain approximately halfway down the central walk, on the western side of the site (Figure 35).

Signs
Three types of signage currently exist on the site. The first type is the National Park Service signs found at each entrance. The metal signs measure approximately 2 x 3 feet and are mounted on the wrought iron fence. They announce Dorchester Heights as a part of the Boston National Historic Park and list the park rules. The second sign appears at the western entrance, on the more southern of the two gateposts. It is a commemorative plaque honoring Congressman John Joseph Moakley's leadership role in historic preservation and support of the renovations at Dorchester Heights. It was installed upon the rededication of the site in June 1997. The third type of signage features concrete panels built into the retaining walls, with one centered at each entrance. The panels are approximately 6 feet high and 24 feet long, identify the site as both Dorchester Heights and Thomas Park, and provide a brief summary of the site's history. The panel at the western entrance commemorates the site as General Washington's first victory, the northern entrance describes the leadership of General John Thomas, and the southern entrance indicates the importance of the cannons from Fort Ticonderoga. All three panels speak of the evacuation of the British troops from Boston. The panels all are beginning to warp within the walls. On the western wall, this is creating gaps in the mortar where they fit into the wall, and at the south entrance, it is causing cracks around the center joint.

Bollards
In 1980, a group of removable bollards was installed at the bottom of each ramped walkway on both the north and south sides of the park. The 3-foot high, rectangular bollards were set into a steel sleeve and padlocked. The group of two bollards at the north entrance had a chain in between them, and the group of three bollards at the south entrance had no chain connecting them. Only one bollard remains on the site today and is located at the northern entrance to the site. It is a Doric-style, black wrought iron bollard, approximately three feet tall, attached to the granite gatepost to the west of it with a chain. The chain is connected to the bollard with a padlock, and the bollard is securely bolted into the concrete beneath it. It is not believed that the one remaining bollard on the site is one of the historic bollards mentioned in the 1993 Cultural Landscape Report.

Trash Receptacles
Four commercial-sized trash receptacles are found throughout the site. The industrial black wrought iron canisters are approximately three feet in height and have a slatted exterior with no lids. They are not historic and do not contribute to the historical significance of the site.

Landscape Features:

Feature Name	CLI Feature ID	Feature Contribution	CRIS-HS Resource ID	Associated CRIS-AR ID	FMSS Record Type	FMSS Record Number	FMSS Exact Match
Dorchester Heights – 1876 Centennial Monument	146211	Contributing	40090		Asset	1480897	Yes
Dorchester Heights – Henry Knox Monument	146213	Contributing	40091		Asset	1480904	Yes
Dorchester Heights – Perimeter Fence	146215	Contributing	40322		Asset	1008264	Yes
Flagpole	146217	Contributing			Asset	146217	Yes
Drinking Fountain	146219	Noncontributing – Compatible			Asset	1008270	Yes
Allied War Veterans Monument	146221	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Benches	146223	Noncontributing – Compatible			Asset	1025513	Yes
Wrought-Iron Fence between Monument and School	146225	Noncontributing – Compatible			Asset	1008266	No
Bollard	146227	Noncontributing – Compatible			Asset	1284989	Yes
NPS Signs	146229	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Moakley Memorial Plaque	146243	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Concrete Panels	146245	Noncontributing – Compatible					No
Trash Receptacles	146247	Noncontributing – Compatible					No

Landscape Characteristic Graphics:



Figure 29. The 1876 Centennial Monument, located north of the tower (OCLP 2010).



Figure 30. The Henry Knox Monument, located south of the tower (OCLP 2010).



Figure 31. The 1982 Allied War Veterans Monument, located west of the tower (OCLP 2010).



Figure 32. A view of the historic fence that surrounds the perimeter of the site (OCLP 2010).



Figure 33. View of flagpole located on the northwestern portion of the upper terrace (OCLP 2010).



Figure 34. View of acorn-style lighting seen around the site (OCLP 2010).



Figure 35. View of the drinking fountain found on the southern side of the main walkway (OCLP 2010).

Landscape Characteristic: Archeological Sites

Archeological research at Dorchester Heights National Historic Site from 1994 to 1996 revealed evidence of the earthen, star-shaped fort that was built in May 1776. The excavations revealed undisturbed portions of the ditch, the entranceway, and the powder magazine. The lower half of the ditch, as it had been dug into the glacial drumlin, was still intact with portions of a drainage cunette and a banquette-like step preserved at the base of the ditch. The shape of the ditch floor and floor features are presumed to date to 1776 in the absence of contradictory evidence for 1812 modifications (ARCH 1998:i).

The remnants of the entranceway consisted of the original, 1776 stone bridge abutments for crossing the ditch. The abutment included part of the original, 1776 drain that is thought to have carried surface water from the parade ground into the ditch. The gate probably consisted of a double-door hung from vertical jambs that were supported by an underground sill threshold. The entranceway is located close to where it was shown on a 1776 drawing of the fort (ARCH 1998:i).

The powder magazine remains revealed a mortared, fieldstone foundation with supporting floor partitions and drains of the 1776 powder magazine. Brick rubble suggests there was also a brick superstructure in the foundation. The magazine had been repaired or re-built in 1814 when the British threat during the War of 1812 increased. Other military artifacts found included fragments of an officer's epaulet were found between the foundation walls and, and musket balls from the ditch at the gate (ARCH 1998:i).

Condition

Assessment Interval (Years): 8

Next Assessment Due Date: 06/11/2033

Condition Assessment and Impacts

Condition Assessment: Good

Assessment Date: 06/11/2025

Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

A major rehabilitation project at the site will be completed in the Spring of 2025. The overall landscape is well-maintained and in good condition.

Condition Assessment: Fair

Assessment Date: 09/21/2021

Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

Provisional. The condition reassessment for this CLI has been delayed due to Covid-19 travel restrictions and staffing shortages. In the meantime, the most recent condition assessment will remain in place until it is reassessed as part of a comprehensive update of the entire CLI. Planning and scheduling this update will occur in FY 2022.

Condition Assessment: Fair

Assessment Date: 06/24/2010

Condition Assessment Explanatory Narrative:

The Dorchester Heights National Historic Site is considered to be in “fair” condition. In 1997, the park completed a major rehabilitation of the site, including rebuilding retaining walls, repaving paths, and increasing accessibility to the site. Some of the retaining walls, walks, ramps, and stairs have been affected by slope creep, which causes movement of the structures. Some walkways are beginning to show signs of concrete spall, particularly in areas where water collects, and retaining walls and stairs are beginning to shift and separate. The site has also been subjected to human forces, including vandalism on the site, as well as deterioration of elements such as the grass slopes and monuments due to the large number of dogs using the park. Overall, repairs will be needed in the next 3 -5 years to prevent further harm to the resources.

Impacts

Type of Impact: Erosion

Other Impact:

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: Fill placed on the original drumlin was not properly compacted, leading the erosion of the soil in several areas.

Date Identified: 08/31/2010

Type of Impact: Exposure to Elements

Other Impact:

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: Weathering is apparent on the Dorchester Heights Monument tower (particularly on the north side) as well as on the 1876 Centennial Memorial. The walkways are experiencing concrete spall around areas where rain water collects.

Date Identified: 08/31/2010

Type of Impact: Pests/Diseases

Other Impact:

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: Dogs have caused damage to various areas of the site, particularly to the grass and the smaller monuments.

Date Identified: 08/31/2010

Type of Impact: Vandalism/Theft/Arson

Other Impact:

External or Internal: Internal

Impact Narrative: Vandalism and littering has been occurring on the site, particularly that done to the benches and other site features.

Date Identified: 08/31/2010

Treatment

Stabilization Measures

Treatment Documents

Treatment Type:	Rehabilitation
Treatment Completed:	Yes
Document Type:	General Management Plan
Document Date:	1994-12-01
Title:	
IRMA Link:	
Narrative:	

As stated in the park's 1994 General Management Plan/Environmental Assessment, Volume 3 for Dorchester Heights National Historic Site (GMP 1994:10-11):

"The grounds will be rehabilitated to correct current deficiencies, preserve significant features and allow for appropriate contemporary use such as accessibility.

A goal of the rehabilitation of Dorchester Heights is to provide universal accessibility, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, while still maintaining the historic character of the site. However, it was determined that full accessibility to the monument was not recommended. It was determined that universal accessibility should be provided to the sidewalk that surrounds the base of the monument. This would allow all visitors to enter the park and to reach the high point of the site to enjoy the views to the surrounding Boston neighborhoods and harbor. The experience from the interior of the monument will be provided through on-site interpretation.

In order to provide full accessibility, some regrading of the site will be necessary along with realignment of the north and south access ramps and reconstruction of the concrete retaining walls. The current retaining walls were added after the periods of significance and are currently in disrepair. In regrading and realignment of the circulation and slopes, emphasis will be on retaining the historic character of the park, in particular, the simple, symmetrical layout of the park that is considered to be an important character-defining feature. All walks and walls will be concrete.

Site furnishings, such as benches, signs, and trash receptacles, will be selected that are in character with the site and, where possible, are vandal resistant. The current "cobra" style street lights will be replaced with more appropriate lights in character and in scale and attention will be paid to visitor safety in placement and number. The wrought-iron fence that surrounds the park will be repaired or replaced in kind and will be used to replace the chainlink fence that runs along the eastern boundary. A water fountain may also be added.

The historic pattern of vegetation, consisting of grass and canopy trees will continue. Irrigation may be added to assist in maintenance of the site. The side slopes will be regraded and compacted to correct problems of soil movement. The side slopes would then be smoothed to improve their appearance and to facilitate maintenance. Weedy trees growing along the south slope would be removed and replaced with lawn for ease of maintenance and to respect the historic integrity of the site. The mature canopy trees on the upper slope should be replaced over time. Trees may also be planted along the radial walks to restore the historic planting plan and to reinforce views to the monument.

A new drainage system will be needed to replace the current one that has been found to be in disrepair. A new water line will be needed if a water fountain is added and electrical service will need to be upgraded."

In 1997, the park completed a major rehabilitation of the site, including rebuilding retaining walls, repaving paths, and increasing accessibility to the site. A project entitled "Improve Dorchester Heights Treescape and Site Furnishings" (PMIS 12899) will replace ten large sugar maples and add additional benches and trash receptacles to complete rehabilitation of the grounds. Compacted clay soils will be removed and replaced with a topsoil/compost mix and dry wells added to improve site drainage.

Approved Treatment Costs

Cost Narrative:

Treatment Type:	Bulk Import TBD
Treatment Completed:	No
Document Type:	Cultural Landscape Report
Document Date:	1993-10-01
Title:	Cultural Landscape Report, Dorchester Heights / Thomas Park, Boston National Historical Park, South Boston, Massachusetts
IRMA Link:	https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Reference/Profile/2188207
Narrative:	

Approved Treatment Costs

Cost Narrative:

Bibliography and Supplemental Information

Bibliography:

Citation Author	Citation Title	Year of Publication	Citation Publisher	Citation Type	Citation Location	Citation Number
Zaitzevsky, Cynthia	Dorchester Heights/Thomas Park: Cultural Landscape Report for Boston National Historical Park, South Boston	1993	National Park Service			
	“List of Classified Structures.”	2010	National Park Service			
	General Management Plan, Volume 3, Dorchester Heights, Massachusetts.	1994	National Park Service			
Mueller, James W., Steven R. Pendery, and William A. Griswold	The Fort on the First Hill in Dorchester, Archeological Investigations of Colonel Gridley’s Revolutionary War Star Fort at Dorchester Heights, South Boston, Massachusetts.	1998	National Park Service, Denver Service Center			
Millman, Amy	National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, Dorchester Heights National Historic Site.	1981				
Menzies, Ian	“US to restore historic Heights in S. Boston,” Boston Globe, 25 April 1978.	1978				

Gordon, Edward	National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Dorchester Heights Historic District	2001				
Child Associates Inc., Ann Beha Associates	Historic Structure Report: Dorchester Heights Monument, South Boston, Massachusetts	1993	National Park Service, Denver Service Center			
	“Annual Report of the Public Grounds Department for the Year 1910-1911		City Documents No. 29-1911, page 4.			

Supplemental Information:

Supplemental Information Title:

Supplemental Information Narrative:

Ruth Raphael, planner for Boston National Historical Park, phone interview by author, 23 March 2010.

Supplemental Information:

Supplemental Information Title:

Supplemental Information Narrative:

Ruth Raphael, planner for Boston National Historical Park, review comments, 25 June 2010.

Landscape Documents:

File Name	Date	Attachment Type
BOST_Bunker Hill-CNY-Dorchester Heights_CLI Updates Notes_2025.pdf		

Source