



Then—Newly-completed East Orange portion of the park in 1901 with running track on the left.

Now— Track is newly-upgraded with rubberized running/walking surface.

To accomplish their desired aesthetic, the Olmsted Brothers urged extending the park north and south to fill out the block and west of the river to Cleveland Terrace.

The citizens of Bloomfield wanted a county park, too. Fearing the possibility of another sewage treatment plant within its borders, the town began purchasing the low, swampy land near the town center for Bloomfield Park. By the end of 1911, Watsessing Park was expanded to the east side of Glenwood Avenue and north to Bloomfield Avenue.



Building one of the decorative bridges over the Second River in the Bloomfield Addition

Again, the Olmsted firm was asked to design the park. The grading, construction, and planting of the Bloomfield Addition to Watsessing Park continued into 1915. By 1916, the public was able to enjoy every inch and every improvement of the nearly 70-acre park.

Today, Essex County Watsessing Park continues to provide open space and recreation facilities for the community. Spearheaded by an ongoing initiative by Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. to ensure parks continue to meet the public's needs, playgrounds with modern equipment and rubberized safety surfaces have been installed, soccer and lacrosse players compete on a synthetic grass field, walkers and runners can do laps on a rubberized track, lawn bowlers enjoy upgraded greens, and historic features have been enhanced.



Help keep your park beautiful! Join the Friends of Watsessing Park Conservancy
www.FriendsofWatsessing.org
Watsessingpark@gmail.com

Happy 100th Anniversary! Watsessing Park continues to play a vital role in providing the community with open space for recreation and leisure. With the Friends of Watsessing Park Conservancy, we are committed to maintaining this beautiful place and ensuring it remains a focal point and resource for our residents.



Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.,
 Essex County Executive
 Board of Chosen Freeholders



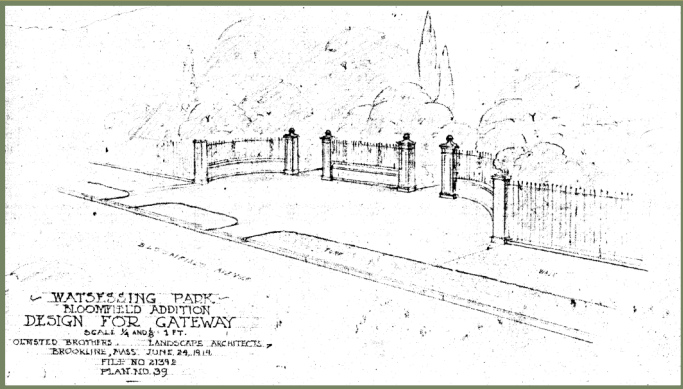
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Putting Essex County First

ESSEX COUNTY WATSESSING PARK: CELEBRATING A CENTURY

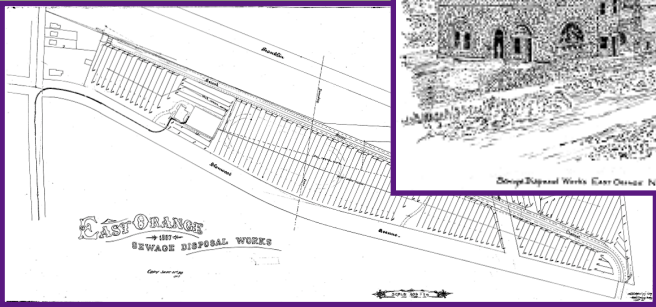


Serving neighborhoods in East Orange and Bloomfield for over a century, Watsessing Park is part of the Essex County Parks System, the first county park system in the country. Like most of the early Essex County parks, Watsessing was designed by the renowned Olmsted Brothers landscape architecture firm.



The earliest portion of the park in East Orange had an interesting pre-park history. According to tradition, enough quantities of copper were found on nearby Dodd family land in 1720 to warrant a stamping mill beside the Second River in what is now the park. Later, the Dodds built a sawmill at that site. They dammed the Second River to create a millpond, and water ran from the pond through a raceway to power the mill.

Sewage treatment was an important issue of the late 19th century. In a progressive move in the 1880s, East Orange had established its own sewage disposal plant. They chose a low-lying spot, Dodd’s millpond, at the northern end of town and stretching into Bloomfield.



Despite the use of “scientific methods,” the Bloomfield neighbors complained of the odor and the plant was decommissioned after a brief time.

In 1898, East Orange turned over the site of its former Disposal Works to the Essex County Parks. By 1901, the Olmsted Brothers’ plans had been implemented and the East Orange portion of the park was being enjoyed.



The Second River flows from south to north for the entire length of Watsessing Park. Joining the Second River within the park is Toney’s Brook on its way east from Essex County Glenfield Park. The waterways provide a picturesque landscape and contributed to the creation of the man-made Lake Watsessing in the mid-19th century. Over the decades, much effort has gone into channeling the river and initiating flood prevention measures.



Left:
Early postcard

Right:
1960s flood control efforts

Far right:
Decorative bridge over Second River



MORE EARLY SCENES IN WATSESSING PARK



Left:
Then—Early postcard showing the bandstand near Conger Street
Now—Park improvements in 2003 included renovation of the bandstand

Bottom:
Then—Bowling green, opened in 1924
Now—Bowlers continue to play on the modernized synthetic grass surface, and have won national competitions

Above:
Then—Children’s House and wading pool in 1914
Now—A Spray ‘n Play feature is being planned for the park



Right:
Then—Playground 1915
Now—The playgrounds were modernized in 2003 and 2015

