

FULLER PARK  
(Esteyville Common)  
Bounded by Estey Street and Pleasant Street  
Brattleboro  
Windham County  
Vermont

HALS VT-10  
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

### FULLER PARK (Esteyville Common)

HALS NO. VT-10

Location: Bounded by Estey Street and Pleasant Street - Brattleboro, Windham County, Vermont

42.846270, -72.568621 (Center of Bandstand, Google Earth, WGS84)

Significance: Fuller Park is a community greenspace located in the center of the Esteyville neighborhood in Brattleboro, Vermont. Development of Esteyville began in 1869 when the adjacent J. Estey Organ Company purchased several large estates and subdivided the property into building lots for company employees. Levi K. Fuller, president of the J. Estey Organ Company, donated the land to the community for use as a public park in 1886. The focal point of Fuller Park is a hexagonal bandstand that was used for community performances. The park serves as a community gathering place in the heart of the Esteyville neighborhood.

Description: Physical Characteristics

Fuller Park is triangular in shape (scalene) and occupies a 1/3-acre parcel of land between Estey Street and Pleasant Street. The east edge of the park is approximately 250' long and fronts Estey Street. The west edge is approximately 212' long and fronts Pleasant Street. The south edge is approximately 170' long and borders an adjacent residential property. A concrete sidewalk measuring 3.5' in width runs from the northern tip of the park along its western edge, parallel to Pleasant Street. It is separated from the edge of the road by an 8'-wide curbed grass strip. The edges of the park are defined by a mixture of coniferous and deciduous trees. On Estey Street, a maple and a white pine are set approximately 10' back from the curb, and another maple is in the southeast corner of the park. On Pleasant Street, two maples and a birch are set approximately 15' from the curb. Aside from the aforementioned sidewalk, Fuller Park is all grass and has no other hardscaping.

A metal flagpole on a low, square concrete pedestal is set approximately 60' south of the northern tip of the park. The pedestal bears the following inscription, which is cast into the concrete:

L E S  
1976

“L E S” refers to the “Ladies Enterprise Society of Esteyville”, an organization involved with the maintenance and upkeep of the park. The installation of the

flagpole was most likely related to the nation's bicentennial in 1976.

The bandstand is located approximately 16' south of the flagpole, equidistant from Estey Street and Pleasant Street. Unlike most bandstands in Vermont's town greens, which are elevated slightly above grade on low masonry footings or wood framing, the Fuller Park bandstand has an enclosed, hexagonal masonry base constructed of rusticated concrete block. The masonry base stands 7' high and has a small metal door on the south side to provide access to an interior staircase that leads up to the bandstand platform. Each side of the bandstand measures 11' 4" in length. The performance platform on top of the base is open on all sides and has a hexagonal pyramid roof supported by six Tuscan columns with Tuscan caps and bases. The columns support a full entablature with a dentilled cornice. The roof is clad with patterned tiles: the lower courses are laid in horizontal rows, with the first course of tile having clipped corners. The upper portions are laid in a diamond pattern. Between each column, on the underside of the entablature, there are two evenly spaced light sockets for bulbs that once illuminated the bandstand at night. A low balustrade with square balusters encloses the floor of the bandstand, which is made of wood. This is the second bandstand on the site, having been constructed in 1913-1914 to replace the original bandstand, which was removed in 1899.

The only other objects in the park are a wooden bench mounted on steel posts set in the ground approximately 20' southeast of the bandstand, and a portable picnic table set near the south edge of the park.

#### Current Physical Condition

Consisting of grass and six trees, the landscaping of Fuller Park appears to be in fair condition. The focal point of the park, the bandstand, is in poor condition and is not being used due to safety and accessibility concerns. There is evidence of deterioration and rot on the trim and performance floor, and entire sections of molding are missing in several areas. A vertical crack at the southwest corner of the masonry base has damaged four of the rusticated concrete blocks, with one missing a large chunk from the face of the block. The rusticated concrete block base is an important character-defining feature of the bandstand, representing an early use of this material which was introduced in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. There is graffiti on the bead board ceiling and on some of the blocks, and peeling paint in many areas.

History: The history of Fuller Park is closely related to the development of the surrounding neighborhood, which is known as "Esteyville" and occupies a series of ten interconnected streets on hilly terraces southwest of the downtown. Developed by Jacob Estey in 1869, Esteyville was home to many of the J. Estey Organ Company employees and their families. The new houses were generally modest 1½ or 2 story frame buildings with porches, on lots large enough for a small garden in back and green space between house and street in the front. The

streets were wide and lined with maple trees planted in 1871. Local children had their own neighborhood school, and all residents made use of Fuller Park and its bandstand.

Unlike many factory housing communities in which workers lived in tenement-style housing owned by the company, Esteyville was founded on the principle of home ownership. The company sold house lots, and sometimes houses, often providing mortgages for the new homeowners.

As the company owned the building lots and stood to make a profit on each house lot sold, it is no surprise that Jacob Estey “advised” his employees to buy property in the new neighborhood. On average, the lots were sold for between \$300 or \$400 each, so at an original purchase price of \$10,000, the company stood to profit \$100 to \$150 on each sale.

In an 1894 article about the development of Esteyville since its founding 25 years earlier, the *Vermont Phoenix* newspaper described Esteyville as follows:

Esteyville was settled by honest and industrious, law-abiding citizens who kept neat homes and tidy streets. It now has 78 houses 106 families—424 people—and a primary school with a basement for holding meetings, socials, etc. The artillery band meets there. Fuller Park was a gift of ex-governor Fuller. Advents are soon to build [a] church. The town has beautiful surroundings.

About equal numbers of Estey employees and non-employees lived in Esteyville, but it appears that a majority were in some way connected to the Estey organ industry. The fact that so many people not specifically connected to Estey chose to make their homes in this part of town speaks to Esteyville’s general appeal as a place to live. In fact, Levi K. Fuller himself lived in Esteyville for a time, in a large house known as “The Pines,” located off Estey Street, above Organ Street. The house still stands, though now much modified and converted into rental units. Its grounds were developed into a small circular housing development, known as Estey Circle.<sup>1</sup>

Fuller Park was established in 1886, when Levi K. Fuller donated a parcel of land owned by the J. Estey Organ Company to the Esteyville community. The donation, and the suitability of the parcel for use as a public park, is documented in the *Vermont Phoenix*:

...through the unbounded generosity of our friend Col. L. K. Fuller, he is about to present to the Village a beautiful park, with

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<sup>1</sup> Rebecca Williams, “Neat Homes and Tidy Streets: Development of the Esteyville Community in Brattleboro, Vermont, 1869-1900” (University of Vermont, 2004).



all modern improvements, including a stand for our Esteyville Brass Band. The Park is a triangular piece of land lying just south of the schoolhouse, between Estey and Pleasant Streets, and is geographical [sic] center of Esteyville. It has a commanding view of the whole village and is one of the peculiar places fitted by nature for a park. The land is owned by J. Estey & Co. and is cheerfully given by them.<sup>2</sup>

While the 1886 article states that the J. Estey Organ Company was to donate the property to the village, a subsequent article in 1901 notes the following: "A survey of Fuller Park in Esteyville, in which the late ex-Governor Fuller was greatly interested, will be made at an early date, preparation to a transfer of the property to the town by the Estey Organ Co."<sup>3</sup> Today Fuller Park is owned by the Town of Brattleboro and overseen by the Recreation and Parks Department.

In May 1887, the park was enclosed with a row of rock maple trees, and the community expressed its pride in the park as follows: "We are having one thing that we feel proud of and that is our little Fuller park. Nature seldom lends more to beautify a small plot of ground that it has to this. What nature has withheld art is supplying."<sup>4</sup>

The bandstand noted in the 1886 article was removed in 1899, much to the dismay of at least one Esteyville resident who voiced his concern in the local press:

The people of Esteyville would like to know by what authority Geo. E. Bishop, or any other individual had to tear the band stand down, and remove it and the seats from the park, and make kindling wood of the same. The band stand, or the lumber, was given by our late friend and benefactor, Gov. L. K. Fuller, and built by the people of Esteyville. We have long been proud of our little park, so neatly fixed up by the governor, and the people of the whole village who have met with us on many an occasion to listen to speeches as well as music from the old stand, will be surprised to learn that the spirit of vandalism should lead any one to commit so bold an act as to move a landmark so dear to many..."<sup>5</sup>

In his defense, Geo. E. Bishop replied with own letter, stating that: "If I have been guilty of any criminal offence in removing an old band stand that was endangering the lives of children, the proper officials will take care of me." While the resolution of this controversy is lost to history, Fuller Park remained

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<sup>2</sup> *Vermont Phoenix*, "Esteyville Felicitates Itself, and the Phoenix Extends Congratulations," June 25, 1886.

<sup>3</sup> *Vermont Phoenix*, June 21, 1901.

<sup>4</sup> *Vermont Phoenix*, "Happy Esteyville," May 13, 1887.

<sup>5</sup> *Vermont Phoenix*, "Fuller Park Without a Band Stand," May 5, 1899.

without a bandstand for more than a decade.

In 1910, the *Vermont Phoenix* reported that a new bandstand would be built in Fuller Park. It was to serve a dual purpose, with space to store a firefighting hose cart on the lower level and a performance platform above.<sup>6</sup> This article, however, is contradicted by the memory of resident Ruth Holden, whose recollections were recorded by Lynn Caulfield in 1977: “First talk of the bandstand came about in August 1913, at the Ladies Enterprise Society meeting. The ladies spoke of a real bandstand; white, with pillars and a roof. Underneath the bandstand could be a room for storing dishes, silverware, folding chairs and tables...after many rummage sales, food sales, quilt raffles and lawn suppers, the bandstand was finally completed. On June 3, 1914, we had dedication services.”<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Holden’s recollection is supported by a 1913 article in the *Brattleboro Reformer*, which reads:

At the request of the women and other citizens of Esteyville the selectmen went there yesterday, and after inspecting the location gave permission for the erection of a bandstand near the center of Fuller park. The cost of the structure, about \$500, has been raised. It is to have a cement foundation and be covered as is the one on the common and have plenty of storage capacity. William E. Cushman will begin work upon it at once.<sup>8</sup>

Another, albeit less visible, component of Fuller Park is a large reservoir that is reportedly located beneath the bandstand. The J. Estey & Company complex, located just down the hill from Esteyville, required an extensive fire protection system, including fire hydrants placed throughout the manufacturing complex. These hydrants were gravity-fed from a reservoir underneath Fuller Park, most likely installed when the land was owned by J. Estey & Company.<sup>9</sup> An undated map of the Estey Organ Company complex shows a “hydrant main” and a “sprinkler main” running up the hill towards Fuller Park. A note on the map reads: “These mains conect [sic] with reservoir on hill – 100’ head – 29000 gals.” Likewise, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century show a 3” water pipe running through the tip of Fuller Park and down the hill to the Estey Organ Company complex. While details about the exact size, location, and construction of the reservoir have yet to be confirmed, the number of sources referencing its existence makes it probable that some sort of cistern or reservoir is indeed located under the park.

Since its creation in 1886, Fuller Park has served as the focal point of the

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<sup>6</sup> *Vermont Phoenix*, June 3, 1910.

<sup>7</sup> Lynn Caulfield, “This is Esteyville, U.S.A.” (Esteyville, 1977), 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Brattleboro Daily Reformer*, “Esteyville Will Have Bandstand,” November 29, 1913.

<sup>9</sup> Dennis G. Waring, *Manufacturing the Muse: Estey Organs & Consumer Culture in Victorian America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 117.

Esteyville community. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century it served as an important gathering place for residents to attend performances or listen to speeches on the bandstand. In 1972, the “Esteyville Neighborhood Conservation Program,” funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, made improvements to the area surrounding the park. In 2017, improvements in the park are necessary, specifically to the bandstand. Due to its poor condition, it is no longer being used and is falling into disrepair. This reflects poorly on the rest of the park and the surrounding neighborhood and needs to be addressed in the very near future. Fuller Park is intimately connected to the history of Esteyville and is worthy of continued upkeep and maintenance as a community and historic asset.

Sources: *Brattleboro Daily Reformer*. “Esteyville Will Have Bandstand.” November 29, 1913.

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Historian: Devin A. Colman  
State Architectural Historian  
Vermont Division for Historic Preservation  
July 2017

Entry – 2017 HALS Challenge: Documenting City or Town Parks



Photograph 1. View looking south into Fuller Park. Estey Street is on the left, and Pleasant Street is on the right. (Devin Colman, July 2017)



Photograph 2. View looking southeast into Fuller Park. (Devin Colman, July 2017)





Photograph 3. View looking northeast from Pleasant Street into Fuller Park. (Devin Colman, July 2017)



Photograph 4. View looking northwest into Fuller Park from Estey Street. (Devin Colman, July 2017)





Photograph 5. View looking south into Fuller Park from Estey Street. Note the relationship of the flagpole, bandstand, and mature trees. (Devin Colman, July 2017)



Photograph 6. Detail of concrete flagpole base, with “L E S 1976” inscribed. “L E S” refers to the “Ladies Enterprise Society of Esteyville”, an organization involved with the maintenance and upkeep of the park. The installation of the flagpole was most likely related to the nation’s bicentennial in 1976. (Devin Colman, July 2017)





Photograph 7. View looking north at the bandstand from the center of Fuller Park. Note the rusticated concrete block foundation, the patterned-tile roof, and metal door leading into the base. Stairs in the base lead up to the performance platform. (Devin Colman, July 2017)





Photograph 8. Detail of the bandstand showing rusticated based, Tuscan columns, balustrade, and entablature. Note the missing wooden trim piece from the edge of the performance platform, graffiti on the concrete block, and graffiti and peeling paint on the beadboard ceiling. Light sockets on the underside of the entablature once held bulbs for evening performances. (Devin Colman, July 2017)





Photograph 9. Detail of south corner of bandstand showing vertical crack and resulting damage to the rusticated concrete block. Note the missing wooden trim piece from the edge of the performance platform and peeling paint. (Devin Colman, July 2017)





Photograph 10. View looking north from the south edge of Fuller Park, showing the relationship between the park bench, the bandstand, and trees along the edges of the park. (Devin Colman, July 2017)