



**Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
HISTORIC PROPERTY DATA FORM**

**DATABASE  
ID#** \_\_\_\_\_

**TOWN** East Providence **VILLAGE** Riverside

**ADDRESS** 700 Bullocks Point Ave **PLAT/LOT** 413/13/001

**NAME(s)** Crescent Park and Crescent Park Carousel

**PROPERTY TYPE** Bld Site **OWNERSHIP** Loc

**STATUS** NHL NR Indiv C

**NR DISTRICT** \_\_\_\_\_

**USES:** Select terms from National Register table

**CURRENT** Recreation **HISTORIC** Recreation

**SITING: SETBACK** \_\_\_\_\_ **ft** **LOT SIZE** 3.51 **acres**

**STORIES** 1 **ROOF(s)** Conical

**MATERIALS:** Select terms from National Register table

**ROOF** Asphalt **WALL** Wood

**FOUNDATION** Stone **OTHER** \_\_\_\_\_

**WINDOWS** 6-, 8-, and 11-light wood



**Photo ID** EAPR\_BullocksPointAve\_700\_E



**Photo ID** EAPR\_BullocksPointAve\_700\_S

ALTERATIONS:	PORCH	WINDOWS	TRIM	OVERALL
Material	Min	Min	Min	Min
Configuration	None	None	Min	Maj

**INTEGRITY**  Excellent  Good  Fair  Poor  Destroyed

**PROPERTY COMPONENTS:** List & number in order of importance. Include the primary component of the resource as number 1.

Component Type	Code	Count	Component Type	Code	Count
(1) Carousel	B-C	1	(4) Gazebo	St-NC	1
(2) Clam Shack	B-NC	1	(5) Former amusement park site	Si-C	1
(3) Bathhouse	B-NC	2	(6)		

EVENT	DATE	SOURCE	NAME (person/firm/organization)	ROLE
Crescent Park opens	1886	ArtInRuins	Charles Boyden	Owner/Operator
Carousel construction	1895	Sign	Charles I. D. Looff	Designer
Crescent Park closes	1977	ArtInRuins		
Crescent Park sold/demo	1979	ArtInRuins		
Concession Stand built	2004	Assessor	City of East Providence	Owner
Carousel restored	2018	Website	City of East Providence	Owner

**ARCHITECTURE:** If more than one, list & number in order of importance

**TYPE** \_\_\_\_\_ **STYLE(s)** \_\_\_\_\_

**SURVEYOR** PAL **DATE** Nov. 2018 **REVIEWER** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE** \_\_\_\_\_  
Use reverse for comments, history, and bibliography Form version 200702rev161101

This form was produced as part of a survey of resources associated with the twentieth-century African American Civil Rights Movement in Rhode Island and provides a summary of information relevant to that historical context. The surveyed property may have associations with additional historical contexts that are not discussed.

### **History:**

Crescent Park in East Providence opened in 1886 under the ownership of Charles Boyden. Boyden hired famed wood carver Charles I. D. Looff to build the Crescent Park Carousel, which opened in 1895. The park changed ownership in 1901, and the new owners, the Hope Land Company, had Looff add other rides to the nascent amusement park, including a tunnel of love and rollercoaster. Looff's son, Charles Looff, took ownership of the park in 1920 and expanded it, adding a roller rink and the Alhambra Ballroom. Other rides were added through the mid-twentieth century. In 1969, the Alhambra Ballroom burned down. Through the remainder of the mid-twentieth century, attendance dwindled and the park began to fall into disrepair. The park closed in 1977, and pieces of it were auctioned off in March 1979. The buildings and structures that didn't sell, including the carousel, were slated for demolition, but local residents rallied to save the carousel, which remains in operation today following a 2018 restoration (ArtInRuins.com 2019; CrescentParkCarousel.org 2019).

Crescent Park's association with the civil rights movement in Rhode Island stems from its use for Emancipation Day festivities. Rhode Island's Emancipation Day celebrations began in August 1854 at Roger Williams Park and initially celebrated only the emancipation of Caribbean blacks (Stokes 2018). In the United States, Emancipation Day is recognized on a variety of dates, depending on when various states and territories learned of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Abraham Lincoln, which took place on January 1, 1863. Celebrations were often held on January 1 and on August 1, the date of the emancipation of blacks in the West Indies, but the January celebrations appeared to have died out by the 1880s (Greenwood 2009:176). The shift to a preference for August celebrations in New England may have been influenced in part by the harsh winters (Greenwood 2009:176). Celebrations sponsored by the Grand United Order of Colored Odd Fellows began in 1882 and were initially held at Crescent Park's rival amusement park across Narragansett Bay, Rocky Point (*Providence Daily Journal* 1890). In the late 1920s, the Otha Boon Lodge 931 of the Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World took over organizing Emancipation Day celebrations at Rocky Point, promoting the event and receiving a percentage of the day's ticket sales in exchange. Several years into the arrangement, the Lodge learned that park management was closing the swimming pool during the Emancipation Day celebrations so black visitors were unable to use it. Park management refused to change the policy despite protestations from the Lodge, prompting the Elks to move the celebrations to a rival amusement park across the bay – Crescent Park (Bell Jr. 1997).

Former Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Officer Fred Williamson was interviewed by Rhode Island state folklorist Michael Bell about his memories of Emancipation Day celebrations at Crescent Park (quahog.org 2015). According to Williamson, the events provided an opportunity for older folks to gather and reminisce about the old days while children played at the amusement park. People came from across the region, including Worcester, Boston, and Springfield, to take part in the celebrations. Families packed a picnic lunch or ate at the Shore Dining Hall, which served clam cakes, clam chowder, and other seaside favorites. In the evening, the Alhambra Ballroom hosted a dance played by one of the leading black bands in New England that lasted until around one in the morning (quahog.org 2015).

At the 1951 Emancipation Day celebrations, noted newspaper editor John Carter Minkins, then 82 years old, addressed nearly 15,000 people about uplifting the African American race (Lemons and Lambert 2003:437). Emancipation Day celebrations were held at Crescent Park through at least the 1960s (Conrad 2012). Later celebrations in Rhode Island were held at Roger Williams Park and Waterplace Park in Providence and continue to the present day.

The Crescent Park Carousel was listed in the National Register in 1976 and became a National Historic Landmark in 1987.

## Bibliography:

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