

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Norman City Park New Deal Resources

other names/site number _____

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2. Location

=====

street & number NE Corner, Jct. Daws St & Webster Ave not for publication N/A
city or town Norman vicinity N/A
state Oklahoma code OK county Cleveland code 027
zip code 73070

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification
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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification
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I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the
- National Register
- See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the
- National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain):

Signature of Keeper Date
of Action

=====
5. Classification
=====

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>0</u>	<u>3</u> buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>5</u>	<u>6</u> structures
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u> objects
<u>7</u>	<u>10</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

=====
6. Function or Use
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: outdoor recreation

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: outdoor recreation

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: WPA Standardized Style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE
roof N/A
walls STONE
BRICK
other CONCRETE

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====
8. Statement of Significance
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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Economics
Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance 1934-1950

=====
8. Statement of Significance (Continued)
=====

Significant Dates 1934
1937

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Works Progress Administration, builder
Federal Emergency Relief Administration, builder
National Youth Administration, builder

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)
 preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data
 State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Name of repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreeage of Property Five Acres mol

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>14</u>	<u>642240</u>	<u>3898670</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u>N/A</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

N/A See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Cynthia Savage, Architectural Historian, for the City of Norman

organization Savage Consulting date May 2000

street & number Rt. 1, Box 116 telephone 405/459-6200

city or town Pocasset state OK zip code 73079
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Additional Documentation
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Norman, The Honorable Bob Thompson, Mayor

street & number P.O. Box 370 telephone _____

city or town Norman state OK zip code 73070

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SUMMARY

The Norman City Park New Deal Resources Historic District, located in Abe Andrews Park, Norman, Oklahoma, includes a large, native stone amphitheater; native stone entrance gates; two native stone foot bridges; a concrete wading pool; two native stone bathhouses; and, a native stone lined ditch. The gates were probably constructed by workers employed under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) in 1934. The majority of the other resources were constructed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) between 1935 and 1937. Although primarily constructed by the WPA, part of the ditch was rip-rapped by the National Youth Administration (NYA).

The boundaries do not include the entire original city park due to an overall lack of historic association and integrity. The boundaries form a sort of elongated 'L' to encompass the New Deal Resources. Excluded from the boundaries are two nonhistoric playground areas; a large, native stone park building possibly partially built by the WPA but extensively renovated and enlarged in 1970; nonhistoric tennis courts built in 1955/1956; a nonhistoric, underground water storage facility built in 1953; and, a large grassy area consisting of the majority of the north side of the park and containing only several chain link backstops.

Nonhistoric resources included within the boundaries include three, modern, wooden bridges over the WPA ditch; two, modern, asphalt parking lots; a modern, wooden park sign; a picnic area in the southwest corner containing nine picnic tables, a small wood bridge and metal, pipe fencing along the east side; and, a new, concrete block, storage building for the amphitheater. Due to a loss of integrity, also considered noncontributing resources are the two, historic, native stone bathhouses. In about 1984, the city discontinued use of the bathhouses. The west bathhouse was completely gutted to form a picnic shelter. The east bathhouse was partially enclosed to accommodate the pool's new filtration unit. All windows and doors were removed, as was the roof on the west bathhouse.

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The Norman City Park was formally established with the filing of the official town plat in the early 1890s. The park consisted of 17 1/3 acres between Daws Street on the south, Park Avenue on the west, Joyce Street (now known as Acres Street) on the north and Front Street on the east. However, Front Street was never fully developed through the park; thus, the east boundary for this nomination is set at the railroad tracks which form a barrier between the park and Jones Street. The only change to the original configuration of the park was the extension of Webster Street through the southwest corner of the park at an unknown time. This created a small wedge of park land, outside the boundaries of this nomination, which is currently an open grassy area. The park is surrounded by residential housing on the west, north and east. The majority of residences date from the early history of Norman, although some modern intrusions have been constructed. The block south of the block was completely cleared and a new municipal building complex has been erected. Construction of the municipal complex was begun in about 1973 with the latest addition being constructed in 1996. During this period, it is probable that the two noncontributing parking lots were constructed on the south side of the park, presumably to provide additional parking for the city offices, as well as the park.

DESCRIPTION

The shape of the Norman City Park is a trapezoid. The majority of New Deal resources constructed within the park are located on the southern portion of the block. Except for the drainage ditch which extends along the entire southern length of the park, the resources are pretty much concentrated on the west half of this area. The boundaries for this nomination have been drawn to include the New Deal Resources, while excluding those resources which do not retain their integrity or do not meet the National Register's age requirements. Although the park as a cohesive unit has been an historic feature of Norman since the town's founding, the amenities within the park have changed throughout the years. As such, the park's integrity has been similarly affected with the construction and demolition of various resources. Thus, the boundaries for this nomination were determined by the inclusion of those extant

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resources which were historic and which retained their ability to convey their historic associations.

The boundaries for the Norman City Park New Deal Resources Historic District form a sort of elongated 'L'. Contained within this area is the historic amphitheater, two native stone bridges, the native stone lined ditch, the native stone park gates, the concrete wading pool and two native stone bathhouses. Except for the bathhouses, these resources retain their integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling and association. In about 1984, the bathhouses were extensively changed, thus losing their integrity. Nonhistoric, and thus noncontributing, resources included in the boundaries due to their proximity to the historic resources consist of three wooden bridges, a picnic area including nine picnic tables, one small bridge and modern pipe fencing along the southwest boundary, two modern parking lots and a modern wooden park sign.

The WPA amphitheater is the highlight of the park's New Deal resources. (Photos 1-4) Located in the northwest corner of the boundaries, the amphitheater forms a half circle. Built of native stone with a compatible, rose colored, concrete cap in 1936/1937, the structure is typical of WPA constructions of this nature. Along the west side of the amphitheater is an historic, asphalt, half circular parking lot. The parking lot is edged on the east by native stones. On the west edge of the parking lot is a grassy area which extends to Webster Street, the west boundary. The parking lot is not considered a separate resource from the amphitheater due to its historic association with the structure.

Leading from the parking lot to the amphitheater are four, evenly spaced, native stone walks. (photos 3 and 4) The walks extend through the seating area of the amphitheater, forming aisles, to the front walk and low wall separating the seats from the stage area. The west edge of the amphitheater is defined by a concrete sidewalk and a low, native stone wall, topped with a concrete cap. Similar low walls are also in place along the sides of the amphitheater and in front of the seats. Marking the points where the walls are interrupted by the walks and at midway points along the side walls are slightly taller and wider piers. The piers are also native stone with a concrete cap.

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The amphitheater has three sections of seating, consisting of twenty rows of seats.(photo 1) The center section is slightly wider than the flanking sections. The seats are composed of narrow, native stone benches topped with a concrete cap. The seats are separated by grassy strips. A few of the seats have been spot repaired with unmatching, nonhistoric concrete. Although somewhat unsightly, the repairs do not impact the integrity of the amphitheater.

Providing a barrier between the seating and the stage areas is a low, native stone wall. Immediately in front of this is a nonhistoric, concrete sidewalk which connects to other areas of the park. Historically, the area between the seating and the stage was a water filled channel. Although the area has a drainage problem which allows water to build up, the channel is now a sidewalk surrounded by grass. The historic stepped rock along the stage predominately remains in place.

The amphitheater's stage rises three steps above the channel area. The historic native stone steps remain along the west side of the stage. Both the north and south sides of the stage area have been neatly landscaped to provide separation of the stage area from the remainder of the park. Originally, the stage area was covered with a grass turf. According to the Norman City Parks Department, the stage has been redone twice. Most recently, the stage received a new concrete covering in about 1997. Because the material modification does not affect the original design or intent of the stage area, this alteration does not impact the amphitheater's integrity.

At the same time that the stage floor was re-laid, the noncontributing cinder block building immediately behind the stage on the east was constructed. The building was constructed to store materials for amphitheater productions and provide electricity for these events. The building has a hipped, asphalt roof with no windows. There are two metal slab doors on the east side of the building.(photo 4)

South of the amphitheater is a noncontributing picnic area. This area contains

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nine modern picnic tables and one wooden bridge over a small unlined drainage ditch. Along the west side of this area is a low, modern, pipe fence which separates the park from the street. Although the same type of fence is used elsewhere in the park, within the nomination boundaries this is the only area that has it. The bridge has simple metal railings and a wood deck. Because of their scale and cohesion, the fence, picnic tables and bridge in this area are not considered as separate resources. Instead, the overall area is considered as one noncontributing structure. (photo 7)

East of the picnic area is the rectangular concrete wading pool and two native stone bathhouses. (photo 5) The contributing wading pool, originally constructed in 1927, was rebuilt by the WPA in about 1937. In 1984, a new filtration unit was added to the pool. Previous to this, the pool had to be regularly drained in order to be cleaned. The filtration unit is housed in the east bathhouse and did not result in any tangible changes to the pool. The pool is a simple concrete structure. The pool is only a wading pool, intended for area children. As such, it has a gentle slope from both ends towards the middle but it is not deep. Along the east side, there are two steps. The west side does not have any steps. The pool is encircled by a concrete sidewalk which is further enclosed by a chain link fence. Placed on both the east and west sides of the pool, are two, modern, benches. The chain link fence is probably a nonhistoric feature but is necessary for safety purposes. The benches and fence, although relatively unattractive, do not destroy the pool's integrity as the historic resource remains easily discernible.

Immediately south of the pool are the two native stone bathhouses. (photo 6) The bathhouses are identical in design. Similar to many WPA buildings, the bathhouses feature a fortress-like appearance. This appearance is reinforced by the battlements along the roofs of both buildings. The battlements are separated from the remaining wall by a projected, three step, band along the upper wall. The remaining wall area is relatively undecorated save the inherent adornment of the polychromatic native stone and the decorative buttresses around the corners. The buttresses subtly flare from the wall near the bottom.

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The various openings in the bathhouses are wood framed. The historic window and door types are unknown. Facing one other, the buildings have identical facades. The front of the buildings feature two large window openings flanking a single entry. The south elevation on both bathhouses contains a single large window opening near the front portion of the buildings. Towards the back of both buildings on the south elevation are smaller openings which have been infilled with native stone. The rear elevations have no openings. The north elevations are dissimilar. The east bathhouse's north elevation features a single, large window in the front portion of the building. There are no openings in the rear portion of the east bathhouses' north wall. The west bathhouse has two large window openings in its north wall.

The interior finish of both buildings is brick. The original interior arrangement is unknown. Currently, the west bathhouse is completely open, including the roof. The east bathhouse is partitioned roughly in the middle with a native stone wall and double metal, slab doors. The back portion of the building is used to house the adjacent pool's filtration unit. The front portion is open. The wood plank ceiling remains on the east bathhouse.

Although probably constructed by the WPA, the bathhouses are noncontributing elements due to a loss of integrity. Built in 1935/1936, the bathhouses provided sheltered dressing and shower areas for the wading pool. In 1984, the city discontinued use of the buildings as bathhouses. The historic windows and doors were removed in both buildings. Additionally, it is possible that new openings were added. The roof on the west bathhouse was also removed to create an open-air picnic shelter. The pool's new filtration unit was installed in the east half of the east bathhouse which resulted in a closing in of that portion of the bathhouse. The filtration unit is accessed by double, metal, slab doors. The west part of the east bathhouse is open.

South of the bathhouses and picnic area is the contributing ditch lined with native stone. The ditch was rip-rapped by the Works Progress Administration in 1937, with the National Youth Administration also undertaking part of the work. The ditch continues in both directions beyond the nomination and park boundaries; however, it is visually separated by a short, concrete, barrier

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wall and the blacktop of the intervening street on the west side and the railroad bridge on the east. The ditch extends the entire east-west width of the boundaries. The ditch has a concrete bottom and native stone lined walls with a flush concrete cap. (photos 7 and 10)

Over the ditch are five bridges. Two of the bridges are historic. Both historic bridges are constructed of native stone and concrete. The west historic bridge provides access over the ditch to a concrete sidewalk by the east bathhouse. The west bridge has a brick lined, round arch over the ditch which creates a hump in the concrete bridge deck. The native stone walls follow this hump, gradually rising in the center than sloping back down. Off of the main bridge walls are shorter, native stone, wing walls. The west historic bridge is easily distinguished from the east historic bridge as it is smaller and has the round arch over the ditch. (photo 8)

The historic, east stone bridge is aligned with the historic native stone gates to provide an expansive entrance to the park. This bridge is both wider and longer than the west historic bridge. It also has a low, square opening over the ditch. Similar to the west bridge, the east bridge has native stone walls. The east bridge also has native stone wing walls. The east bridge walls do not slope to the center of the bridge. Instead a small end section steps up to a larger, level section. The tops of the walls are decorated with individual rock pieces. (photo 9)

The three noncontributing bridges are simple, modern, wood bridges. (photos 6 and 10) Two of the nonhistoric bridges are located towards the west end of the ditch. The westernmost bridge allow access to the noncontributing picnic area just north of the ditch. The middle bridge leads to the west bathhouse. The third noncontributing bridge is located east of the historic bridges, providing access from the noncontributing east parking lot to a nonhistoric playground area outside of the nomination boundaries.

For the most part, the area south of the ditch is a grassy area. However, within this area are two, modern, noncontributing parking lots. As previously mentioned, these parking lots were probably built after 1973 to provide

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overflow parking for the city's new municipal complex. The parking lots are simple, rectangular, asphalt structures with concrete curbs. The parking lots are separated by a grassy area containing the historic park gates and historic west bridge. The west parking lot is located south of the swimming pool. The east parking lot is south of a nonhistoric playground area which is outside the nomination boundaries. (Photo 10)

Centered between the noncontributing parking lots are the historic park gates. (photo 11) Built in 1934, probably by workers employed by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, the gates provide a striking park entrance. Erected of native stone, the gates have a concrete cap. The park gates are identical in design. From the inside, the gates rise from a low wall to a tall, tapered pier. The pier is the only projecting element so the tapering of it is clearly evident. The pier is flanked by a medium height, wavy, stepped wall. The wall extends for a short distance as a level surface before terminating in a slightly taller, native stone pier. The piers on both gates are topped with a concrete cap. Landscaping around the gates also enhances the verticality of the design of the gates.

Slightly above center on the tapered pier of the west gate is a metal park sign. The sign was probably added to the pier in the mid-fifties, although it may replace an earlier sign. The sign reads "ABE ANDREWS PARK/This park is dedicated as/Abe Andrews Park/in honor of James Adron Andrews/who served the city of Norman/as Park Superintendent/during the years/1926 to 1956." The sign does not significantly impact the integrity of the west gate.

The east gate features an historic, small, round U.S. Coast Guard and Geodetic Survey benchmark in the center of the tapered pier. The benchmark was incorporated into the original design of the east gate. In the center of the benchmark, the word "Norman" and "1934" have been inscribed.

Just to the southwest of the east gate, is a modern, noncontributing, wood, park sign. This simple wood object reads "Andrews Park/City of Norman/Parks and Recreation Department." It is unknown when this sign was constructed.

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Overall, the New Deal resources in the Norman City Park form a cohesive group. These resources are set off from the remainder of the park resources due to their similar building material and functional design. Although the community building in the center of the park, outside of the boundaries, is also constructed of native stone, the design of the building is clearly modern.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Except for the bathhouses, the historic resources within the boundaries of this nomination retain their integrity. There have been minor changes to the individual resources which have been discussed above. Overall, these changes do not affect the ability of the resources to convey their historic appearance and function.

The historic bathhouses are the exception. The bathhouses were extensively altered in the mid-1980s when the city discontinued use of the buildings as bathhouses. Detailed description of the buildings and alterations have been provided above. Although the bathhouses are considered as noncontributing resources, they remain essential elements of the overall history of the New Deal-era work within the park and do not detract visually from the cohesive collection of resources.

The cohesion of the New Deal resources has been impacted by the construction of various modern intrusions. These include the three, modern, wooden bridges over the WPA ditch; two, modern, asphalt parking lots; a modern, wood, park sign; a picnic area in the southwest corner containing nine picnic tables, a small wood bridge and metal, pipe fencing along the east side; and, a new, concrete block, storage building for the amphitheater. These noncontributing resources are interspersed among the historic resources. For the most part, the noncontributing elements are smaller in scale than the historic resources and of different construction material. The largest of the intrusions are the two modern parking lots located on the south side. However, due to their nature and their location on the periphery of the park, the parking lots do not impact the visual qualities of the historic resources.

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Overall, the integrity of the Norman City Park New Deal Resources Historic District is sufficient to convey the historic character of the park. Constructed during the mid-1930s, the New Deal resources form a collective group of recreational facilities that has allowed the park to thrive as a entertainment and leisure center within Norman for nearly seventy years.

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SUMMARY

The Norman City Park New Deal Resources Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs, specifically the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), National Youth Administration (NYA) and Works Progress Administration (WPA). These programs not only bolstered the local, state and national economy through much of the Great Depression of the Thirties but also contributed a lasting legacy to Oklahoma's built environment. Additionally, under Criterion A, the Norman City Park New Deal Resources Historic District is significant for its association with entertainment and recreation in Norman. The New Deal resources within the Norman City Park provided the residents with popular, easily accessed, entertainment and recreation facilities that were available at no or minimum charge since the resources construction in the mid-1930s through 1950.

BACKGROUND

Similar to many towns in central Oklahoma, Norman's origins date primarily back to 1889 and the first Oklahoma Land Run. However, Norman has a brief pre-1889 history as a stop along the branch line extended through central Oklahoma by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway beginning in 1884. The railroad station, and subsequently the city, was named for a government engineer who had camped in the vicinity of the present site of the town in 1872.¹ Although there were only a few railroad buildings on the site of Norman Station, one of the lasting impacts of the original railroad occupation of the site was the town's Original Townsite plat. Railroad officials took upon themselves the duty of preparing a townsite plat which reflected their interests. As such, unlike many Oklahoma towns, Norman's townsite does not follow the traditional

¹Institute of Community Development, University of Oklahoma, "Norman, the University City: Community Resources," (Norman, Oklahoma: Community Development Committee of the Norman Chamber of Commerce, 1949), 5.

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grid pattern espoused by the federal government. Instead, Norman's townsite was laid out in relation to the points of the railroad rather than a compass. Later development of Norman followed the traditional grid pattern, creating a noticeable jog between the original townsite and subsequent additions.

On 21 April 1889, the site that would become the town of Norman was open prairie except for the handful of railroad buildings. By nightfall, 22 April 1889, Norman had mushroomed to a town of five hundred citizens and numerous temporary shelters. The Santa Fe Railway turned over its plat to the first townsite company that arrived. Rather than remarking the lots of the new town, the townsite company embraced the railroad's development plans with construction quickly underway.

Although Congress provided regulations for the land run, they failed to authorize a territorial government for the Unassigned Lands. Over a year after the land run, Congress finally passed the Oklahoma Organic Act on 2 May 1890. This act organized the government of Oklahoma Territory, in addition to other important matters. Under the act, the first seven counties of the future state of Oklahoma were created. Cleveland County was one of these first seven counties created in Oklahoma Territory.² Norman was quickly designated the county seat of Cleveland County.

Norman experienced a relatively stable population growth through the first half of the twentieth century. By the time Oklahoma was officially granted statehood in 1907, Norman's population stood at 3,040. Three years later, the town's population stood at 3,724, a gain of nearly seven hundred residents. In 1920, Norman claimed just over five thousand residents. The 1920s proved be a major decade of growth for Norman. City population nearly doubled from 5,004 in 1920 to 9,603 in 1930. Gaining slightly less than 2000 residents in the ensuing decade, by 1940 Norman's population stood at 11,429. The 1940s also

²Arrel Morgan Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries, 2nd edition (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 176-178.

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bought an explosion in the number of Norman residents so that by 1949, city population reached 20,180. It must be remembered, however, that these numbers did not accurately reflect the number of people actually living within the city due to the number of college students residing in the town on a temporary basis.³

Two major state institutions greatly influenced the maturation of the city throughout this time period, continuing to the present. The "most important factor in the growth" of the town was the location of the University of Oklahoma in the city. The University opened its doors in September 1892 in a building on Main Street. By 1948, over eleven hundred students attended the school which included nearly one hundred buildings on a main campus of nearly three hundred acres on the southwest side of Norman. The second state institution which affected the development of the town was Central State Hospital. Opened in 1915 in a previously privately owned mental institution, Central State Hospital became the state's largest mental treatment center by the late 1940s. In addition to operating its own farm and dairy, the hospital also ran canning plants, a laundry, mattress factory and furniture factory. In all by 1949, the hospital was valued at over four million dollars with 111 buildings spread over an area of 820 acres.⁴

As the town of Norman grew, one original feature remained relatively intact. Included within the railway's original plat was a plot of land reserved as a city park. Although the boundaries of the city park were modified slightly as the original townsite plat was finalized, the location of the park was never contested. The final townsite plat for Norman reserved 17 1/3 acres in the northwest corner of the Original Townsite for a park. The park, aligned to the railroad tracks like the rest of the Original Townsite, formed a large trapezoid. The park was bounded on the north by Joyce Street, which is now

³Institute of Community Development, "Norman, the University City," 8.

⁴Ibid., 5.

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known as Acres Street. According to the plat, the park's east boundary was to be Front Street; however, this street was never fully developed and the park extended to the railroad tracks with a some small section of park land developing east of the tracks. The above grade railroad tracks serve to visually separate the main park area from the small section of grassy land east of the tracks. The south boundary of the park was originally set at Daws Street, where it remains. The west boundary was originally Park Avenue. At an unknown date, Webster Avenue was extended through the southwest corner of the park to intersect with Park Avenue. This created a small wedge of park land which remains to the present. Currently, this area has no buildings or structures and is visually separated from the main portion of the park by the asphalt street.

Although the park was included in the various plats of the townsite, legal title to the park was not finalized until November 1893 because the necessary fees had not been paid to the townsite board. Apparently, the city was unable to come up with the necessary funds to pay the townsite board as one of the members of the townsite board, Delbert L. Larsh, paid the fee with his own money. Within two months, the city was able to reimburse Larsh the \$15.11 he had advanced.⁵

Efforts to beautify the park began even before legal title to the land was acquired by the city. In March 1893, the town council approved the setting of 750 trees in the park. Unfortunately, the park ground was not broken up and, as dry weather set in, the trees withered. In July, the town council let another contract to break up the sod.⁶

Obtaining a sufficient amount of money to maintain the park, however, continued to be a problem for the town government. In 1898, the town trustees contracted

⁵John Womack, Norman--An Early History, 1820-1900, (Norman, Oklahoma: Published by Author, 1976), 97.

⁶Ibid.

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with A. Phipps to cultivate the park land. Under the terms of the contract, Phipps was required to keep the weeds down in the park and to trim the trees. Additionally, he agreed to not plant cane in the park because it was believed to harm the soil.⁷

During Norman's early years, the park served as an outdoor gathering place for city residents. Use of the park greatly expanded after construction of a circular, wooden bandstand.⁸ Fairly quickly, the city established a park board to administer activities related to the park. Although residents of the community continued to use the park and the city continued to oversee the landscaping of the area, little was done to develop substantial recreation facilities until the 1920s.

By the early 1920s, as automobile usage encouraged overnight travel, many towns and cities along the primary roads began to develop free camping facilities, frequently in the city-owned parks. In 1923, the Norman City Council, along with the local Chamber of Commerce, decided to take advantage of this growing trend and provide overnight camping facilities in the Norman city park. Spending nearly a thousand dollars, the city had built a brick building containing separate stalls with shower heads and toilet facilities by mid-August 1923. Additionally, four outside brick ovens were constructed using funds furnished by local businessmen. The camping facilities quickly became popular with tourists through the remaining 1923-1924 park season.⁹

In February 1925, women from the Norman Federated Women Club proposed that the tourist facilities be moved from the park to a location adjacent to the newly paved highway and "...that the park be developed as a children's playground."

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹John Womack, Cleveland County, Oklahoma, Historical Highlights, (Noble, Oklahoma: Published by Author, April 1983), 39.

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As inducement, the women also offered \$600 in financial assistance if their proposal was carried out. In response, the park board quickly announced that the southwest part of the park would be fenced to provide a children's playground. In order to do this it was necessary to move the county fair building from the west part of the park. Additionally, the park board agreed to the relocating of the tourist camp to the northwest part of the park. By the end of March 1925, the county fair hog shelter had been converted into camping accommodations with "...screened cook rooms in the center and compartments or sleeping quarters at each end."¹⁰

The Federated Women's Club suggested one more major change concerning the overnight use of the park in 1925. To cover the costs of hiring a caretaker, the women recommended that a fee of twenty-five cents per night be charged of visitors. Although the Lions Club felt that this charge might deter tourists, the fee was adopted. As the tourist season opened, few travelers objected to the nominal fee. By August 1925, the local newspaper reported that four hundred families had made use of the tourist facilities during the summer months.¹¹

During the following years use of the park's tourist accommodations continued. On 26 June 1926, the park board appointed J.A. (Abe) Andrews as park caretaker. Andrews continued in this position until his retirement in 1956, at which time the park was renamed "Abe Andrews Park" in appreciation of Andrews' dedication and service. Later in 1926, the State Health Department conferred its official seal of approval on the tourist facilities in the Norman City Park "...as a result of the dedication of the caretaker and his wife." The Oklahoma health department's seal of approval was given to only one park in seven as

¹⁰Ibid., 39-40.

¹¹Ibid., 40-41.

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endorsement for their cleanliness. The Norman City Park received this honor for at least two more consecutive years.¹²

The primary use of the park continued to be for tourist accommodations until the construction of the amphitheater by the WPA in the mid-1930s. Other attractions at the park included a zoo established by Andrews in about 1926. Although dominated by deer, the zoo also featured a bobcat, pheasants, groundhogs, a white possum and a South American ocelot. By the mid-1930s, use of the park became dominated by local residents. The camping facilities were dismantled at an unknown time. Evidence of the zoo has also faded from the park, although not city residents' memories.¹³

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

As advocated by the Federated Women's Club, the park board followed through on their intent to fence the southwest part of the park for a children's playground in 1925. In 1927, a new wading pool for children was constructed. Although the local newspaper indicated that tourists would be appreciative of this new facility, certainly local children were also attracted to this new amenity.¹⁴

By 1931, the park board noted that as many as 1,500 people in one day had been in the city park. Residents were attracted by regularly scheduled entertainment programs sponsored by local churches. Additionally, play hour periods were held once a week for children by supporters of the Church of Christ. The park board sought to make the park an attractive gathering spot by purchasing a new mower with the plan to ... "grade the entire park and to keep it in a smooth condition by regular use of the new mower." During the early

¹²Ibid., 40-41.

¹³Ibid., 41.

¹⁴The Norman (Oklahoma) Transcript, 29 May 1927.

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summer months, the park was cleared and all buildings were painted. The park board also approved the purchase of two large rubber balls for the wading pool, an ocean wave merry-go-round and children's swings to further attract the town's young residents. At some point after July 1931 and before January 1932, a new bandstand was erected in the city park.¹⁵

During 1932, the park board turned its attention to landscaping of the park with no plans made to purchase any additional playground equipment. In April 1932, the board initiated plans for holding "...regular community programs in the City park, on the same general plan that proved widely popular last summer." It was also decided to include "moving pictures" in the regularly scheduled park programs. The programs were to be arranged "...through the cooperation of" T.M. Beard, with the University extension division; W.R. Wehrend, director of the University band; Dr. L.E. Obenhaus, sponsor of the Norman boys and girls band; the Church of Christ; and George V. Metsel, University Y.M.C.A. secretary. Margaret Hollingsworth was appointed to be in charge of the children's playground. Sanitary conditions of the wading pool were to continue to be inspected under the supervision of Dr. Edwin DeBarr, city sanitary inspector. A season swimming ticket for children twelve years old or younger was priced at \$2.50.¹⁶

At the end of the summer, 1933, the local newspaper announced that "Norman's Park System (was) Widely Used This Year." The newspaper noted that "Increased use of Norman's parks this summer has resulted from improved facilities for playground entertainment and picnics, general improvement in landscaping, and to competent supervision of recreation." On average, two thousand people attended the regular scheduled picture shows in the city park. Additionally, when the park board and city jointly sponsored an all-day festival, the crowd

¹⁵Ibid., 28 July 1931 and 14 January 1932.

¹⁶Ibid., 14 January 1932 and 24 April 1932.

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was estimated at three thousand. Activities at the day-long celebration included swimming, a watermelon feast and other free activities.¹⁷

The popularity of Norman's city park continued through the next year. On average, 720 people visited the park each day during the summer. During June, 1934, nearly 14,600 residents visited the park. In July, the number of visitors nearly doubled to 29,385. The number of visitors continued to escalate during the late summer days. During the first twelve days of August alone, a total of 10,115 Normanites took advantage of the park's facilities.¹⁸

It was also during 1934 that the Norman City Park first benefited from the expanding federal aid programs collectively known as the "New Deal." Like the rest of the nation, Norman was significantly affected by the Great Depression of the 1930s. Although a national depression had been developing throughout the 1920s, especially within agricultural communities, it manifested itself largely with the 1929 Wall Street crash. Following the stock market collapse, America's recession grew steadily for three years, culminating in 1932. While conditions did not improve after 1932, they stopped the marked downward spiral of the previous years. However, unprecedented unemployment continued while the country transformed itself from a primarily agricultural to industrial nation. The economic stimulus provided by President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal policies and wartime industries finally brought the country out of the depression by about the early 1940s.¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid., 27 August 1933.

¹⁸Ibid., 30 August 1934.

¹⁹Cynthia Smelker, National Register Multiple Property Document, "Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) Resources in Lincoln County, Oklahoma, 1935-1943." (Available at the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1996), Section E, 6.

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The depression particularly devastated Oklahoma. The state's main industry, agriculture, was severely impacted not only by declining domestic and foreign markets and overproduction but also a decade-long drought. The "Dust Bowl" of the 1930s, encompassing a line of states from the Dakotas to Texas including Oklahoma, ravaged farming conditions. Many Oklahoma farmers unable to make a living took to the road, searching for a more profitable future. The oil market, another major economic force in Oklahoma, collapsed as factories and mines shut down. Unemployment in the state was at an all-time high. With local and state relief agencies increasingly strained beyond capability, the majority of counties in Oklahoma and nationwide were in need of some type of federal relief to alleviate chronic unemployment and its results.²⁰

In efforts to stimulate the national economy and assist citizens in distress, a variety of federal public welfare agencies were established between 1933 and 1939. All agencies shared at least some characteristics, but each was usually designed to sustain an explicit economic entity. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), initiated in 1933, was one of the first federal agencies organized to aid the indigent. This administration channeled federal money to state and local agencies, which then dispensed the funds under a variety of programs to impoverished families. One manner in which relief was dispensed under the auspices of the FERA was limited work relief projects. These projects sought to preserve the dignity of the unemployed by allowing them to work for their money rather than receive an abhorrent hand out from the government.²¹

The work relief program under the FERA went through several stages of development. Early projects were essentially state projects which happened to use available FERA funds. In late 1933, the Civil Works Authority (CWA) was established to respond to the large scale unemployment still incapacitating the nation. The CWA was considered a separate organization from the FERA although

²⁰Ibid., 6-7.

²¹Ibid., 7-8.

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the same people administered both programs with much collaboration in activity. While the CWA was in operation, however, the FERA work relief program was discontinued. The CWA lasted only five months before being terminated due to excessive cost. At that time, the Emergency Work Relief Program was established by the FERA. Under this program, work relief projects fell largely in the jurisdiction of the state but with limited federal regulation. These regulations mandated that employment was granted through local relief agencies who determined need and pay scale; projects had to fall within board FERA categories; the work had to meet certain federal regulations; and, all projects had to have a sponsor. Although effective in assisting the destitute for two years, the FERA ceased operation in May 1935. Critically, the FERA served as a model for subsequent work relief programs.²²

In its brief two year existence, the FERA was active in building public works and improving the infrastructure of numerous towns throughout the nation and in Oklahoma. Between November 1933 and August 1934, the FERA expended a total of \$20,811 for labor in Cleveland County, Oklahoma. A portion of this was spent on improving the parks in Norman, Noble and Moore. Although the local newspaper does not specify what improvements the FERA made in the Norman City Park it is logical to assume that the FERA was instrumental in the construction of the native stone park gates marking the entrance to the park. This type of project was typical of the make-work projects undertaken by the FERA. Other FERA activities in the park during 1934 probably included landscaping and maintenance of existing park buildings.²³

Although the 1934 newspaper did not explicitly date the construction of the gates to that year, the surveyors benchmark in the center of the east gate provides a reliable date of construction. Further, an article in the 29 August 1935 of The Norman Transcript states that the native stone bathhouses under construction during the summer of 1935 would harmonize "...in material with the

²²Ibid., 8.

²³The Norman Transcript, 30 August 1934.

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two large piers that form a gateway at the entrance of the park." This reinforces the belief that the gates were built the previous year and were the first major New Deal construction in the park.²⁴

The Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 replaced the 1933 Emergency Relief Act. Believing that "work rather than direct relief should be the keystone of Federal policy with respect to needy employables," the new act again authorized a program of federal relief employment. Roosevelt legislated the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in May 1935 to provide jobs for the unemployed. In 1939, the Federal Works Agency incorporated the Works Progress Administration, renaming it the Work Projects Administration. The WPA continued in operation until 1943, at which time the economic stimulus provided by the war time industries lessened the need for the WPA and the federal monies allocated to the WPA were required elsewhere.²⁵

During its eight year existence, the WPA worked on two principal types of projects: service projects and engineering and construction projects. Numerous projects of both categories were undertaken in Oklahoma. Service projects employed clerical, technical and professional workers of both sexes. Types of programs undertaken by the WPA as service projects included adult education, nursery schools, library services, recreation programs, museum projects, music projects, art programs, writers' projects, theater programs, research and public records projects, sewing projects, school lunch projects, among various other social service projects.²⁶

Engineering and construction projects, however, comprised the majority of WPA employment, about seventy-five percent until the spring of 1940. construction projects were selected on the basis that they provided "...useful work to the

²⁴Ibid., 29 August 1935.

²⁵Smelker, "WPA in Lincoln County," 8.

²⁶Ibid., 9.

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unemployed at a given time and place," the end result was of functional use to the community and that a sponsor be available. The construction of public utilities, recreation facilities and public buildings accounted for about a third of all engineering and construction projects. Public utility projects included water and sewer systems and sewage disposal plants. Recreation facility projects primarily consisted of work undertaken on city parks. Public building projects involved WPA labor on education and recreation buildings, hospitals, military and naval buildings, prisons and state, county and city government buildings. Nationwide, the WPA constructed and improved numerous airports and airways, city halls, courthouses, libraries, community buildings, highways and streets, parks, cemeteries, armories, schools and natural resource conservation facilities as a part of their engineering and construction projects.²⁷

The WPA work force was drawn from the unemployed living within the project area. Workers were qualified to work on WPA projects by the local Public Welfare Department, working through the National Reemployment Service. WPA employment was restricted to only one family member, usually the head of the family. Initially, the age requirement for workers was set at sixteen years, however, this was raised to a minimum of eighteen years in 1938. Although there was not a maximum age limit, agencies generally did not hire persons over sixty-five years of age due to their eligibility for Social Security. Congress made no restriction on the employment of non-US citizens during the first year of the WPA's existence. Following several acts which progressively restricted the employment of aliens by the WPA, in 1939, Congress prohibited the employment of aliens on WPA projects and each worker was required to sign an affidavit affirming their US citizenship. A hiring preference was not instituted until the ERA Act of 1937 which gave preference to the employment of veterans, which was reinforced in 1941 with the added requirement that the spouse of unemployed veterans and unmarried widows of veterans be given the same preference as veterans. Due to conflicting reasoning, preferential employment based on need was not instituted until 1939. At that time, the WPA

²⁷Ibid., 9.

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established two types of needs: those with no income and those with insufficient income to exist at a subsistence level.²⁸

The WPA paid a flat "security wage," which was slightly higher than direct relief payments but lower than comparable private employment pay. By 1937, the average pay in Oklahoma was thirty-six dollars a month for unskilled labor. Skilled and semi-skilled workers received higher wages depending on the skill required and the experience of the workman. During its first four years, the WPA offered continuous employment as available within the region. Subsequently, the WPA enforced an eighteen month ceiling on employment. However, the worker was eligible for reemployment after thirty days and a recertification of need.²⁹

Although a federal work program, the WPA only facilitated public works projects nationwide. The WPA did not initiate or undertake projects by itself. WPA guidelines required that a "tax-supported public body" sponsor the project which had to result in a permanent and useful addition to the community. The sponsors could be federal, state or local agencies. The majority of projects were developed by county, city, town and village governments and agencies. The project sponsor provided partial monetary support, usually in the form of land and materials, as well as engineering and architectural plans and specifications. The WPA had no fixed percentage of the project cost which the individual sponsor was required to pay. On average, the cost to the sponsoring agency fluctuated between twenty and thirty percent of the total cost. In addition, the sponsor completed the project if the WPA was unable to and maintained and operated the finished project. Ownership of the project belonged to the sponsor upon completion.³⁰

²⁸Ibid., 9-10.

²⁹Ibid., 10.

³⁰Ibid., 10.

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The WPA handled the administration of the project and provided the majority of funds to meet wages. WPA regulations capped federal funds for any one project at about 52,000 dollars to avoid competition with other Depression era programs, particularly the Public Works Administration (PWA). Another New Deal public works program, the PWA did not concern itself primarily with aiding the jobless as the WPA did; rather, the PWA's goal was to stimulate business. In order to circumvent monetary restriction, WPA projects often received several rounds of funding under the guise of additions to the original project. Other projects, for a variety of reasons, also exceeded the WPA allowance.³¹

WPA projects were designed to maximize the number of laborers and the length of employment. Thus, the maximum amount of relief was obtained through every project. To facilitate this goal, WPA workers labored continuously on every aspect of the project from clearing the site to manufacturing furnishings. In Oklahoma, the use of native stone in WPA construction kept project costs low and employed many quarrying and dressing the stone for use. Other materials necessary, such as wood bracing and roof material, were usually obtained locally so as to stimulate the local economy as much as possible.³²

Work-relief projects continued relatively uninterrupted in many communities as the federal government made the transition from the FERA to the WPA. Many projects authorized as FERA projects continued as WPA projects. Presumably, this is the case in the construction of the native stone bathhouses at the Norman City Park. As noted in the newspaper, construction of the bathhouses began during the summer of 1935. The bathhouses were completed and ready for use by 7 June 1936 when the wading pool opened for the summer. In addition to being examined by the park supervisor, children using the wading pool were "...required to take a soap shower in the new bathhouses." As explained by Mrs. Reland Britt Holsapple, playground supervisor, "This procedure is necessary in order to protect the youngsters." In addition to halting other

³¹Ibid., 10.

³²Ibid., 11.

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communicable diseases, this policy was probably also enacted to try to stop the spread of polio, which for unknown reasons was at its height during the summer months.³³

Although the newspaper does not explicitly name the construction of the bathhouses as a FERA project continued as a WPA project, it is assumable that this was the case. The construction of the bathhouses was typical of WPA work in style and materials. Additionally, this type of project was undertaken by the WPA at numerous parks across Oklahoma.

In October 1935, the city of Norman was allocated \$3,248 for road and park improvements. Presumably this also provided sufficient money to finish construction of the existing bathhouses. Due to their modest size, the cost of the bathhouses could not have been very large. Included as one of the city of Norman's first major WPA projects was construction of an additional bathhouse at the city park to go along with their proposed new swimming pool and community building. Although this project did not materialize because city residents did not approve the necessary bond issue to provide the required matching funds, the proposed plans called for a one hundred foot by twenty-seven foot building housing a combined filtration plant and bathhouse. The filtration plant was to be located in the basement with the entire first floor given over to a check room and two dressing rooms. Each dressing room would include twenty-nine dressing stalls and four showers. A foot bath would lead from the dressing rooms to the new 85 by 170 foot concrete swimming pool. The bathhouse was to be constructed of native stone with a reinforced concrete roof. An additional feature of the bathhouse was to be the stairway which led "...to the flat roof where wooden bleachers would be placed for use by persons wishing to watch the swimmers." The total cost of this rather elaborate bathhouse was estimated at only \$11,266. Thus, the much smaller, functional

³³The Norman Transcript, 29 August 1935 and 7 June 1936.

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bathhouses constructed during 1935 and 1936, would have cost significantly less.³⁴

It is doubtful that the city would have authorized the construction of the bathhouses if they were forced to bear the entire cost of the project. Although not a significant expenditure of money, especially as compared to modern construction costs, during the trying times of the 1930s city government was held to a minimum of spending. Additionally, the availability of funds and laborers through the federal New Deal programs provided an almost irresistible lure to hard pressed communities. As early as August 1935, the city of Norman was anxious to receive their share of federal relief monies. According to Neil Johnson, district WPA projects supervisor, the city of Norman was "...entitled to WPA projects totaling \$275,000 in order to take care of its 410 persons on relief rolls." Johnson further stated that

"If the city of Norman doesn't submit enough projects to take care of its case load, the district office will either submit blanket projects to make up the difference or will give the University and Central State hospital additional funds to make sure that enough jobs are provided for the unemployed."³⁵

Although unsuccessful in the first round of WPA allocations to secure a major building project for the city park, the city of Norman rebounded in 1936 with new plans. The 1936 park project called for the construction of an amphitheater "...in the present location of the temporary outdoor auditorium..." and native stone fences and foot bridges, among other general improvements. Although the initial application submitted by the city asked for \$60,000 for the new park plans, the state WPA office reduced the allocation by half to \$30,000. By April

³⁴Ibid., 4 September 1935, 20 September 1935, 10 October 1935, 17 October 1935, 27 October 1935, 1 November 1935, 3 November 1935, and 6 November 1935.

³⁵Ibid., 28 August 1935.

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1937, the city was seeking an extension of \$10,000 to \$11,000 on the park project "...because WPA funds (had) nearly been depleted."³⁶

Construction of the native stone amphitheater and foot bridges in the Norman City Park probably got underway in late 1936. By 14 June 1937, at a cost of \$37,000, the amphitheater was ready use. The amphitheater included three section of seats, a water pool and outdoor stage. According to the park supervisor, regularly scheduled programs and shows would be held every Thursday evening during the summer of 1937. The weekly picture show would be preceded by community singing "...or some form of special program." The first program scheduled for the amphitheater included a rhythm band composed of first and second grade students from Lincoln School.³⁷

By late August 1937, the local newspaper noted that "From a barren, unattractive plot of ground dotted with unsightly frame buildings, the Norman City park has been transformed into one of the most attractive and highly appreciated recreation spots in this part of the state." Although the newspaper conceded that "It took money to do it...the costs to the city was comparatively small for the Works Progress Administration bore the brunt of expenditures." WPA improvements within the park noted by the newspaper included the "...construction of the large, new amphitheater..., the park shelter building recently completed, a new children's wading pool and sanitary bathhouses." It was also noted that "...several bridges (were) installed over the narrow creek at the extreme south end of the park." The native stone bridges were described as "...not only attractive but safe." The creek also received attention from the WPA which constructed rock retaining walls along a portion of it. The newspaper indicated that further work on the ravine would be accomplished by the New Deal's National Youth Administration (NYA) later in the year. Additionally, the increased popularity of the park's picnic ground

³⁶Ibid., 18 June 1936 and 22 April 1937.

³⁷Ibid., 14 June 1937.

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was attributed to the addition of cement tables, outdoor ovens and an overall improved appearance.³⁸

Although the WPA continued to sponsor a free handicraft project at the park, the construction of park structures and improvements was essentially completed by 1937. The following year, over 93,000 persons enjoyed the amenities at the park between 1 June and 13 August. Softball games and the regularly scheduled picture shows topped the list of activities.³⁹

Nationally from its inauguration in 1935 to its termination in 1943, the WPA expended more than 10.75 billion dollars on a diversity of projects. An additional 2.8 billion dollars was provided by various sponsors on WPA projects. Almost eighty-nine percent of the WPA expenditure was used for wages, with seventeen percent of the sponsors' funds spent on labor costs. Approximately 8.5 million individuals nationwide benefitted from WPA employment at one time or another. At the peak of WPA employment in Oklahoma, January 1936, 94,821 persons were toiling on approved projects. By March 1937, 2,971 projects had been approved with 2,581 of those projects being undertaken by the WPA. Total, Oklahoma received over 185 million dollars from the WPA for a multitude of projects statewide. Sponsors statewide expended almost another sixty million dollars. Combined, the Oklahoma economy was boosted by over 232 million dollars in eight years. The projects represent an investment of more than 415 million hours of manpower earning a total of over 140 million dollars in wages for the state of Oklahoma.⁴⁰

The infusion of this much-needed work and money into hard pressed communities relieved the pressure of the unemployed on local, state and national economies. The WPA undertook a number of projects in Norman and Cleveland County,

³⁸Ibid., 29 August 1937.

³⁹Ibid., 28 August 1938.

⁴⁰Smelker, "The WPA in Lincoln County," 11.

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including many service projects, as well as engineering and construction projects. By 1 June 1937, a total of \$742,242 had been spent by the WPA in Cleveland County. Of this, the WPA provided \$445,597 and project sponsors accounted for the remaining \$290,645. WPA construction projects within the city of Norman accounted for \$316,957.32 by itself. Between the fall of 1935 and 1 June 1937, nearly eight hundred Cleveland County residents were employed on WPA projects. Over one million hours of gainful employment was thus provided to needy citizens. These figures did not include the benefit received by local citizens employed on state-wide projects, such as the WPA writers program or commodity distribution.⁴¹

The National Youth Administration (NYA) also had a role in the construction of the New Deal resources at the Norman City Park. Directed to aid young people, the NYA operated under the WPA to provide part-time employment to students, as well as set up technical training programs and provide aid to jobless youths. During 1937, 853 students at the University of Oklahoma benefited from employment offered by the NYA. The students worked on various projects at the city park including rip-rapping portions of the ditch, as well as landscaping and supervising children involved in various programs. Additionally, NYA workers were employed in the city offices and at assorted sewing and handicraft projects. The University paid the students thirty cents an hour for all NYA labor. Although students could work up to sixty-six hours per month, the average was fifty hours. Typically, the students took home a check for \$15 which was combined with a minimum of \$10 provided by outside sources. The outside help was required as it was acknowledged that the students could not survive on the money provided by the NYA alone.⁴²

⁴¹The Norman Transcript, 1 June 1937.

⁴²George Brown Tindall, America: A Narrative History, Volume Two, (2nd edition, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), 1131. See also The Norman Transcript, 26 May 1937.

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As part of its basic criteria, the WPA restricted construction projects to those which resulted "in a permanent and useful addition to the community." Improvements to city parks met this qualification by providing entertainment and recreational facilities which could be used by residents for a limitless amount of time. The structures constructed by the FERA, WPA and NYA during the mid-1930s remain in use at the Norman City Park to this day. Through 1950, the National Register's current fifty year mark, the park's wading pool, bathhouses and amphitheater provided a viable means of entertainment and recreation to Norman residents at little or no cost. The other New Deal structures, although more functional in nature, were important features which facilitated use of the park by citizens seeking entertainment and recreation activities.

As early as 1940, the value of the New Deal resources as part of the entertainment and recreation facilities in Norman was evidenced in increased use of the park. After 1937 and the completion of the construction of the New Deal resources, the total number of city residents visiting the park nearly tripled. It was also projected that attendance for 1940 would be almost double that of the previous year. By mid-June 1940, park attendance had reached 49,000. This is a marked contrast to the total number of persons counted in the park for 1937. Only 55,889 persons were included in the park's 1937 attendance record. Undoubtedly, use of the park as a entertainment and recreation center in Norman continued through 1950.⁴³

The Norman City Park New Deal Resources Historic District is eligible for the National Register for its association with the FERA, WPA and NYA. These programs played an important role in aiding the rebuilding of local, state and national economies during the Great Depression of the 1930s. In addition to employing the jobless on worthwhile public service projects, these programs also contributed a lasting legacy to Oklahoma's built environment. The resources constructed by the New Deal programs in the Norman City Park provided

⁴³R.E. Clement, City Manager, "Norman Yearbook, 1939-1940," (Unpublished report, available at the Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, 1940), 30.

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popular, affordable recreational and entertainment facilities for all
Normanites through 1950. Further, these resources continue to provide the
majority of the basic facilities within the popular city park.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

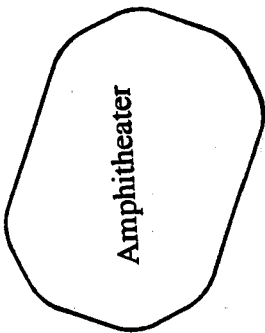
Beginning at the east curb of the intersection of Daws Street and Webster Avenue, proceed 425 feet north to the intersection of Webster Avenue and Park Avenue, then continue north along the east curb of Park Avenue 290 feet to the sidewalk north of the amphitheater parking lot, then proceed 25 feet east on the sidewalk, then proceed 307 feet southeast along the sidewalk to a cross-sidewalk, then proceed east for 150 feet along that sidewalk, then proceed 231 feet south through the grass to a point 33 feet east of the southeast corner of the east bathhouse, then proceed 660 feet east to the railroad bridge, then 125 feet south to Daws Street, then 1015 feet west along the north curb to the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

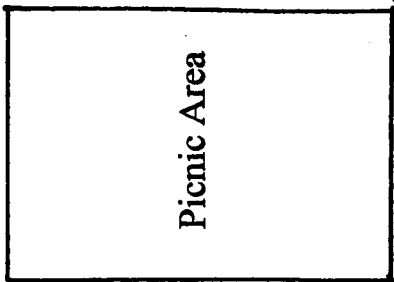
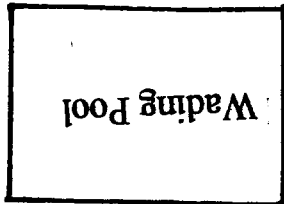
The boundaries form a sort of elongated "L" around the New Deal resources in the Norman City Park. The New Deal resources, constructed between 1934 and 1937 by the FERA, WPA and NYA, are linked by their visual continuity, as well as common building materials and techniques. The boundaries do not include the entire original city park due to an overall lack of historic association and integrity. Excluded from the boundaries are two nonhistoric playground areas; a large, native stone park building extensively renovated in 1970; nonhistoric tennis courts built in 1955/1956; a nonhistoric, underground, water storage facility built in 1953; and, a large grassy area consisting of the majority of the north side of the park and containing only several chain link backstops.

Norman City Park
New Deal Resources
Historic District

NOT TO SCALE



Con Block Building



West
Bathroom

East
Bathroom

Railroad Bridge

Wood Bridge

Ditch

WPA
Bridge

Lined

WPA
Bridge

Wood Bridge

Stone

Wood Bridge

Parking
Lot

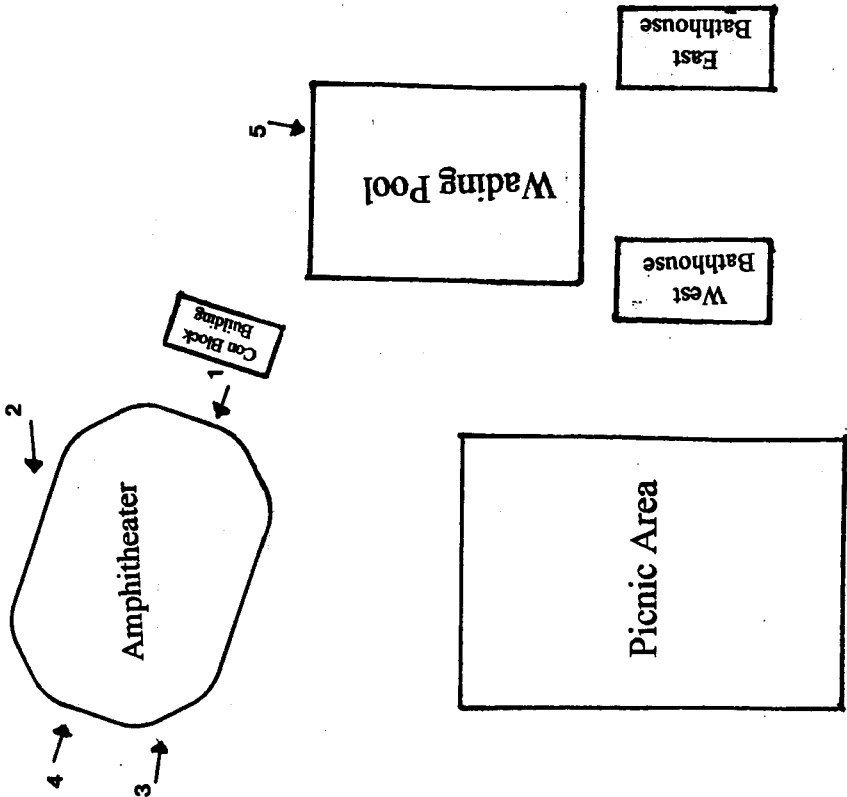
Gates

Parking
Lot

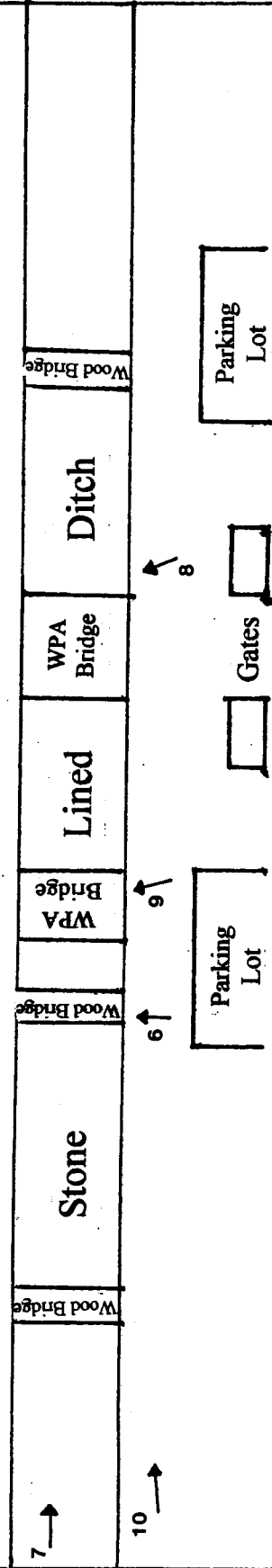
Norman City Park
New Deal Resources
Historic District

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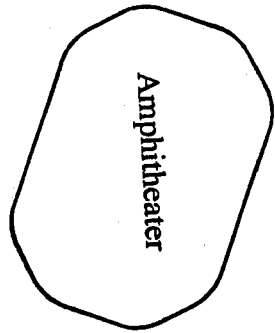
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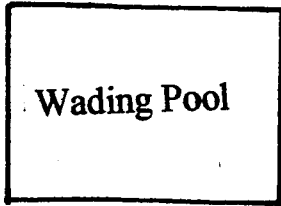
Railroad Bridge



Norman City Park
New Deal Resources
Historic District

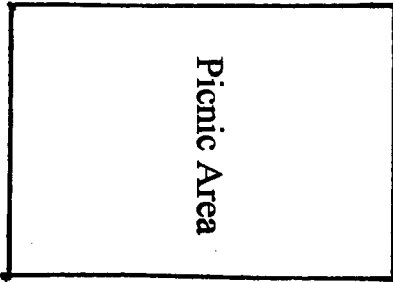


Con Block Building

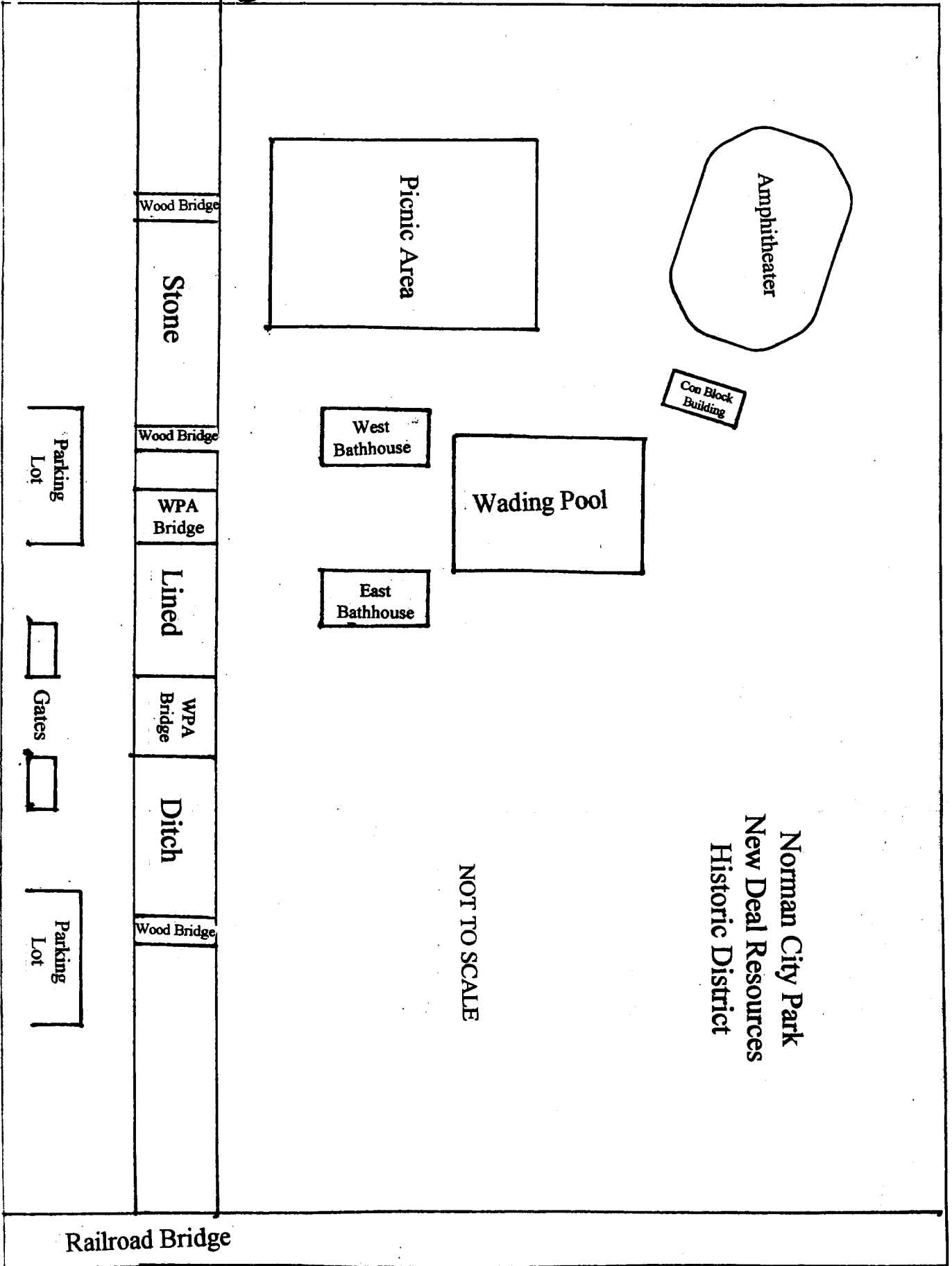


West Bathhouse

East Bathhouse



NOT TO SCALE



Railroad Bridge

Wood Bridge

Stone

Wood Bridge

WPA Bridge

Lined

WPA Bridge

Ditch

Wood Bridge

Parking Lot

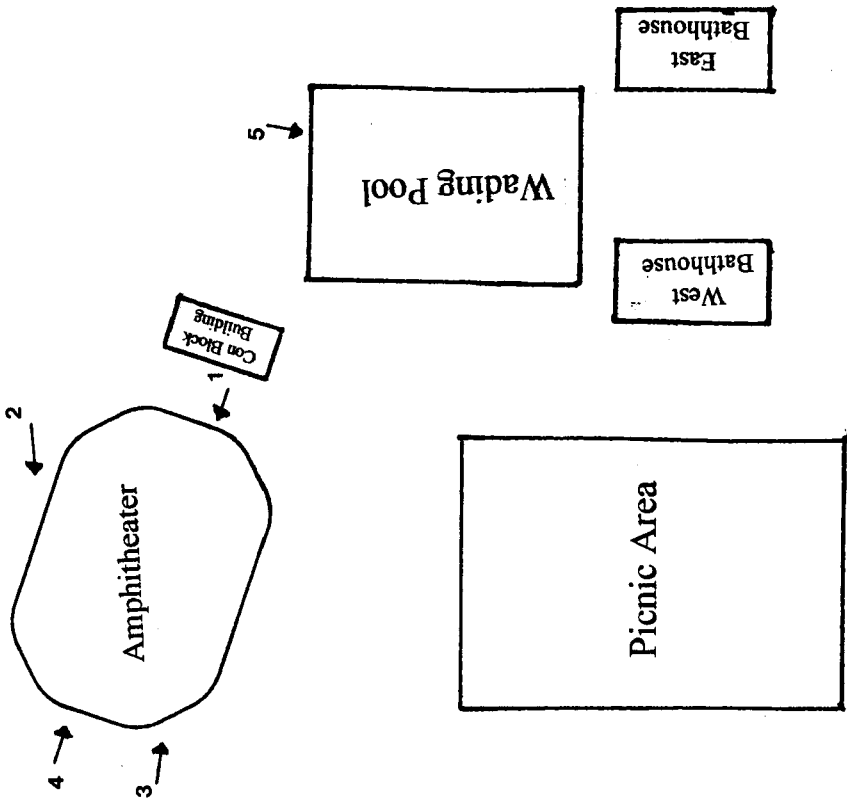
Gates

Parking Lot

Norman City Park
New Deal Resources
Historic District

PHOTO KEY

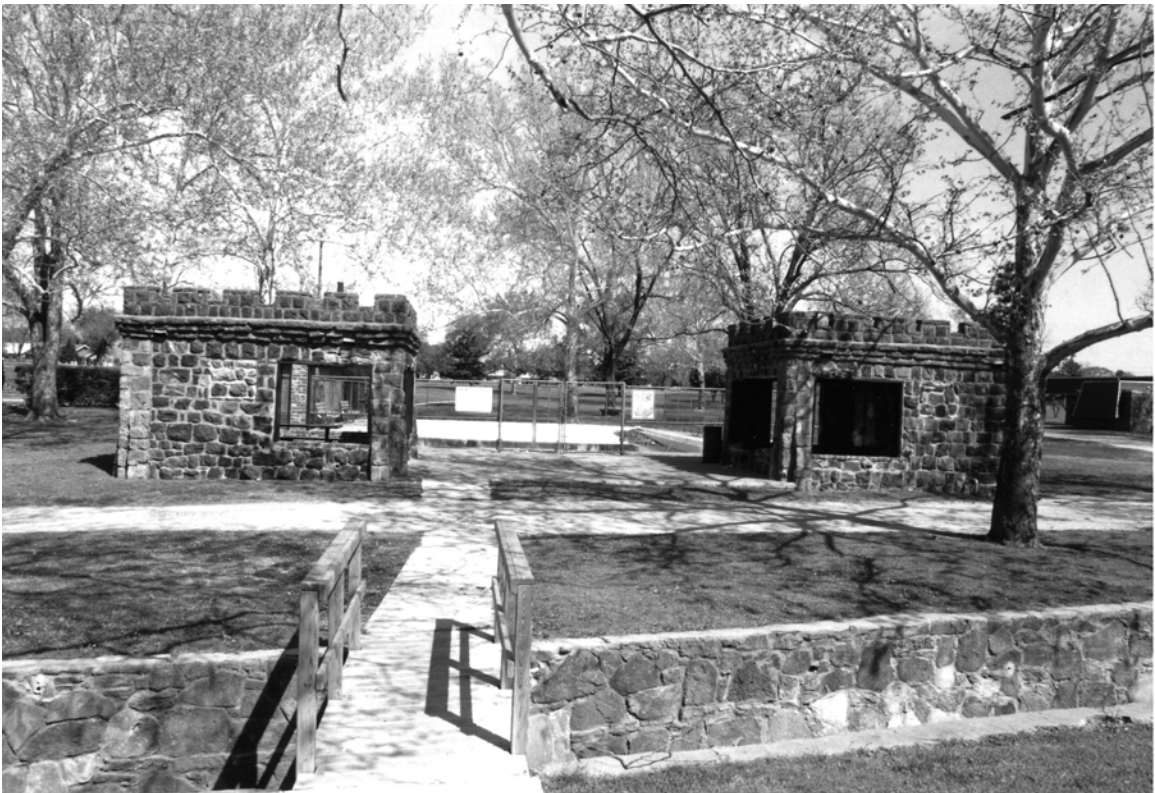
NOT TO SCALE



Railroad Bridge



Norman City Park New Deal Resources





Norman City Park New Deal Resources



