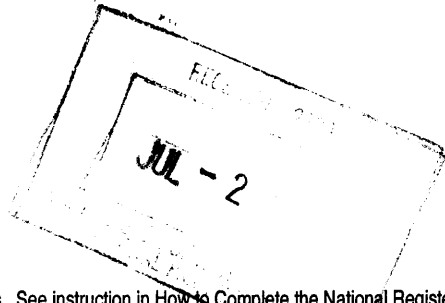


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instruction in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classifications, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Dads' Gates

other names/site number Oregon Dads' Gates

2. Location

street & number 11<sup>th</sup> Ave. E. between Kincaid St. and Franklin Blvd.

not for publication

city or town Eugene

vicinity

state Oregon code OR county Lane code 039 zip code 97403

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally.

*James Hamrick*

June 24, 2004

Signature of certifying official/Title Deputy SHPO

Date

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:  
Action

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 the Keeper

*Edson H. Beall*

Date of

8/11/04

Dad's Gates  
Name of Property

Lane County, OR  
County and State

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property  
(check as many 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  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
1	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions  
(enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/work of art  
LANDSCAPE/street furniture/object

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/work of art  
LANDSCAPE/street furniture/object

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: N/A

roof: N/A

Other: Iron; Bronze; Glass

Narrative Description

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

See Continuation Sheets

Dad's Gates  
Name of Property

Lane County, OR  
County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

Areas of Significance  
(Enter categories from instructions)

- 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.

ART  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance  
1938 - 1941

Significant Dates  
1938  
1941

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

Property is:

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

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A

Architect/Builder  
Dawson, O.B.; Blacksmith  
Lawrence, Henry Abbott; Architect  
Cuthbert, F. A.; Landscape Architect

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B removed from its original location
- C a birthplace or 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

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Bibliography (Cite books, articles, and other sources used in preparing the form on one or more continuation sheets) See continuation sheets

- Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36CFR67) 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: Univ. of Oregon Special Collections

Dad's Gates  
Name of Property

Lane County, OR  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 10 493873 4876972  
Zone Easting Northing  
2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing  
4 \_\_\_\_\_

### 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 Rachel Force

organization Historic Preservation Program, University of Oregon date May 31, 2004

street & number 2357 Crescent Avenue telephone (541) 343-5075

city or town Eugene state OR zip code 97408

## Additional Documentation

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

name University of Oregon

street & number 1278 University of Oregon telephone (541) 346-1000

city or town Eugene state OR zip code 97403

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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## Description

### I. Introduction

The Dads' Gates are large wrought iron gates located on 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue East between Kincaid Street and Franklin Boulevard in Eugene, Oregon. They currently flank the entrance to the driveway/turnaround in front of Robinson Theater on the University of Oregon campus. Begun in 1938 and dedicated in 1941, the Dads' Gates were a Works Progress Administration Art Project. This object functioned (and still functions) as a work of art and as a landscape object. It is composed of a length of fence on either side of two main gate doors that swing inward toward campus. Smaller pedestrian gates through the fence also open in toward campus on either side of the main gates. The Dads' Gates are the only resource to be considered here.

### II. Setting

The Dads' Gates sit on the northwestern border of the University of Oregon campus. They are at the north end of an axis with the University of Oregon's Knight Library. Because of their location at a semi-circular pull-out and driveway along the south side of 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the Dads' Gates have both an urban street setting and a quiet campus setting. When open the gates swing southward into the campus driveway; the front façade faces northward toward 11<sup>th</sup>. The Dads' Gates generally conform to the shape of the semi-circular pull-out so that the main gate is set back furthest from 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue (66 feet). The most northern portion of the fence is set back approximately 28 feet from 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

The grade on which the Dads' Gates sit is level. However, the campus to the southeast of the Dads' Gates is situated on a rise above the road grade. Landscape elements include assorted flowers and shrubs that have been planted at the base of the Dads' Gates on the north and south sides. The nearby campus area has many tall trees, both conifer and deciduous, that can be seen while standing at the Dads' Gates. The closest building to the southwest is McKenzie Hall and the closest building to the southeast is Villard Hall. Robinson Theater is attached to the western façade of Villard Hall and the gates open onto a service drive that leads to the turnaround driveway for Robinson.

The boundaries of the Dads' Gates encompass the Dads' Gates themselves and a minimal perimeter of four feet on either side, so that the total width would be eight feet along the entire length of the Dads' Gates. Because the gates are usually kept open, the driveway covered by the arc of the opening gates is also included in the boundary (a radius of ten feet). A marquee to the east is a recent addition (1997-1998) and is not included in the boundary.

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

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### Description (continued)

#### III. Physical Description

The Dads' Gates are eight feet tall and 120 feet long.<sup>1</sup> Starting in the center there are two gate doors, each 10 feet wide, creating a total 20-foot opening. These are usually swung open towards the campus onto the paved service road leading to the turnaround driveway in front of Robinson Theater. These mark the middle point of the Dads' Gates; both halves mirror each other. Each of the main gate doors contains the bronze University seal at their center and one can see scroll, cross, flower, lyre and spear motifs in the wrought iron. Massive wrought iron pylons containing lotus and trefoil motifs anchor these gates. Atop each pylon is a large glass light set into a wrought iron frame, the crown of which has cross motifs. This gives the pylons additional height; they are approximately 10.5 feet tall if one includes the light fixtures. As the fence moves outward on either side away from the main pylons there is an opening flanked by smaller pylons. This opening contains smaller wrought iron pedestrian gates swung open toward campus that include circle, scroll and spear motifs. The smaller pedestrian gate doors are each 3.5 feet wide, creating a total 7-foot opening. Above each of these gates is written "Oregon Dads 1940". The fence then continues in a straight line before curving inward to the north; more small pylons mark each change in direction. The curving fence approaches 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue and begins to run straight and parallel with the street.

The Dads' Gates have a poured concrete foundation. All of the iron used is wrought iron.<sup>2</sup> The iron is currently painted a light green color. There is no name with which to describe the style of the design; it does not conform to any common ornamental ironwork designs. Wrought iron design motifs used are primarily geometric including scrollwork, crosses and circles. Lyre, lotus, flower, trefoil and spear motifs are also used. The shape of the plan combines linear and curvilinear elements. The main pylons and smaller pylons set at intervals where the fence changes direction provide structural support.

When the Dads' Gates were originally dedicated in 1941 the lights were not in place, although the wrought iron frames for the lights were there.<sup>3</sup> It is unclear when they were installed. Photos indicate it was after 1946, and newspaper records indicate the gates were "completed in their present condition" when the University Theater was built in 1949; this probably included the lights.<sup>4</sup> There is minimal, camouflaged mechanical equipment in place for operating the lights (a pipe in the center of the pylon and an electrical box on the south side of the fence). The lights are lit at night. Currently the Dads' Gates are in fair condition with much of their paint peeling off; some rusting is visible and they require painting.

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<sup>1</sup> WPA projects on campus, UA Ref 1, Box 12, Special Collections, University of Oregon, Eugene.

<sup>2</sup> O.B. Dawson, "The Old Blacksmiths," photocopy of unpublished autobiography (no date, 1960s?), p. 56, UA Ref 2, Box 2, Special Collections, University of Oregon, Eugene.

<sup>3</sup> Dads' Gates photos, UA Ref 3, Special Collections, University of Oregon, Eugene.

<sup>4</sup> Dads' Gates photos, UA Ref 3, Special Collections, University of Oregon, Eugene; Lee Ramsey, "Dads' Gates Product of Depression Period," *Oregon Daily Emerald*, 23 January 1954, p. 1.

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### Description (continued)

#### IV. Landscape Description

The Dads' Gates are situated alongside busy 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue East. A sidewalk runs along the north side of the Dads' Gates along the semi-circular pull-out. This sidewalk stops on either side of the main gates at a curb where the driveway cuts through. Additionally, on either side this sidewalk connects with another walkway leading through the smaller pedestrian gates of the Dads' Gates fence. The service road for Robinson Theater goes south and then curves around in front of the Theater in a loop so that cars both enter and exit from the Dads' Gates. The landscaping in front of the Dads' Gates has been nicely done with flowers and shrubs planted at the base of the fence and lawn stretching out past that to the sidewalk. To the south there are also plantings and lawn stretching to the nearest campus buildings and walkways.

#### V. Alterations and additions

The Dads' Gates look much as they did when they were dedicated in 1941. However, the campus around the Dads' Gates has changed markedly. The paved service drive that now begins at the Dads' Gates was not put in until construction of Robinson Theater in 1949.<sup>5</sup> Previously the Dads' Gates stood on the edge of an empty field dotted with trees – there was no road going between the main gates.<sup>6</sup> Construction of Robinson Theater also created the semi-circular pull-out on 11th as it exists today.<sup>7</sup> A marquee to the east, done in a similar style to the Dads' Gates, was erected in 1997-1998.<sup>8</sup>

In 1952 Gilbert Hall to the south was extended across the north-south axis between the Dads' Gates and the Library, effectively destroying the axis.<sup>9</sup> In 2003 the replacement building for the extension of Gilbert, the Lillis Business School building, was constructed. The portion of Lillis that crosses the north-south axis is walled with glass so that one can see “through” the building to the other side. This has effectively restored the axis.

The lighting fixtures on the main pylons were probably added in 1949, although the frames for the lights were already there. Mechanical equipment for operation of the lights was also added.

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<sup>5</sup> University Theater photos, UA Ref 3, Special Collections, University of Oregon, Eugene.

<sup>6</sup> Campus Aerial photos, UA Ref 3, Special Collections, University of Oregon, Eugene.

<sup>7</sup> University Theater photos, UA Ref 3, Special Collections, University of Oregon, Eugene.

<sup>8</sup> Christine Thompson of Eugene, interview by author, 3 June 2003, Eugene.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Shellenbarger, “University of Oregon Architecture – A Personal Tour.” (Eugene, OR: University of Oregon, 1986),

Dads' Gates  
Name of Property

Lane County, OR  
County and State

NPS Form 10-900-a

OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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## Description (continued)

### VI. Proposed Alterations

Due to construction of the Lillis Business School building to the south of the Dads' Gates, the Facilities Services department at the University of Oregon is planning to restore the Dads' Gates. They are hoping to learn the original color and return the Dads' Gates to their original appearance. It is difficult to tell from historic black and white photographs, but the original color of the Dads' Gates appears to have been darker than it is today; a paint analysis is needed.



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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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## Statement of Significance

The Dads' Gates, located on the University of Oregon campus, are of local significance under National Register Criteria A and C. Completed in 1940 and dedicated in 1941, they were produced with funds from the Works Progress Administration and the University's Dads' Club. The Dads' Gates are historically significant because they are associated with the Great Depression and the W.P.A., events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. They are also significant because they are of extremely high artistic quality and were produced by a master craftsman, O.B. Dawson. This object is a supreme example of wrought iron methods of construction and falls into both the "art" and "landscape architecture" areas of significance. Work began on the Dads' Gates in 1938 and they were dedicated in 1941, therefore 1938-1941 is the period of significance. The dates of significance are 1938 and 1941, marking the beginning of construction and the dedication.

The Great Depression began after the stock market crashed in 1929. A number of economic factors, such as a declining national money supply and the raising of American tariff rates, compounded to make the situation worse.<sup>1</sup> Unemployment increased from 4 million in 1930 to 12.5 million in 1932.<sup>2</sup> By the time Franklin Roosevelt took office as President in 1933, one quarter of the workforce was unemployed.<sup>3</sup> Roosevelt had run on a campaign of a "New Deal" to help get America out of the Depression; he immediately began to establish various work programs and changes to the nation's banking system.<sup>4</sup> Among the job programs was the Works Progress Administration, created in 1935.<sup>5</sup> Historian T.H. Watkins explains the significance of this program:

It was the most massive and comprehensive effort ever undertaken in the nation's history up to that time to ensure that every able-bodied American male – and even some able-bodied American females – would be able to earn at least the basic needs of life for themselves and their families. Even more than the New Deal's earlier relief programs, it was responsible for the creation of a new and immutable intimacy between the people and their government – an intimacy so thoroughly in place today that it is difficult to remember that once it was a revolutionary concept.<sup>6</sup>

Unique to the W.P.A. was its support of arts and humanities through programs such as the Art Project; this provided work to artists and writers and established the precedent of federal support of the arts.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James Kirby Martin and others, eds., America and Its Peoples: A Mosaic in the Making, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.(New York: Longman, 1997), 817-818.

<sup>2</sup> Martin et al., 826.

<sup>3</sup> Martin et al., 832.

<sup>4</sup> Martin et al., 830, 832, 839.

<sup>5</sup> Martin et al., 839.

<sup>6</sup> T.H. Watkins, The Great Depression: America in the 1930s (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 248.

<sup>7</sup> Martin et al., 840.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### Statement of Significance (Continued)

The Depression and the New Deal came to Eugene, Oregon as well. During the 1930s private construction and development came to a halt.<sup>8</sup> Government programs provided assistance; the Civilian Conservation Corps were employed on numerous projects such as tree planting on Skinner Butte in 1934, and the W.P.A. assisted in the construction of Civic Stadium in 1938.<sup>9</sup> The Post Office on Willamette Street was constructed with federal assistance in 1938, using funds from the Public Works Administration (PWA).<sup>10</sup> New construction in Eugene at this time was almost entirely dependent on federal aid programs.

The Dads' Gates were designed and construction began in 1938 when the University of Oregon was in the midst of numerous building projects funded through New Deal legislation.<sup>11</sup> As early as 1914 the Dean of the School of Architecture and Allied Arts, Ellis F. Lawrence, had conceived of having entry gates to the campus on 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue that would form the north end of a north-south campus axis.<sup>12</sup> Finally with the Great Depression and the W.P.A. came the opportunity for the funding of numerous campus building projects, including the Library (1935-1937). In 1938 Lawrence approached Burt Brown Barker, the unpaid vice president of the University and himself an Oregon Dad, about building the gates.<sup>13</sup> The plans were drawn by Lawrence's son, Henry Abbott Lawrence (Abbott), of the architectural firm Lawrence, Holford & Allyn in Portland.<sup>14</sup> Abbott would later design the Erb Memorial Union at the University, which was completed in 1950. The W.P.A. committed funds for the labor (totaling \$20,546) and the Dads' Club agreed to supply the money for the materials.<sup>15</sup> Barker was the single greatest contributor to the project, putting in \$1,650 of the \$4,099 total raised by the Dads'.<sup>16</sup>

Orion Benjamin Dawson (O.B.), was commissioned to build the Dads' Gates. Dawson (1896-1977) learned the blacksmith trade through an apprenticeship while he was in high school. As a soldier during World War I he worked shoeing horses. It was while he was stationed in France that he encountered artistic ironwork for the first time. He befriended a French blacksmith who taught him how to make gates and decorative elements out of wrought iron. Upon his return to the United States he began working doing ornamental ironwork and studying design at night. Dawson moved to Portland, Oregon. He worked with architects who had worked for

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<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Carter and Michelle Dennis (Lead authors), *Eugene Area Historic Context Statement* (Eugene, OR: City of Eugene Planning & Development Department, 1996), 92, 114.

<sup>9</sup> Carter and Dennis, 91, 114.

<sup>10</sup> Carter and Dennis, 92.

<sup>11</sup> *Oregon Daily Emerald*, (Eugene, OR), 6 October 1939, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Regents Meeting Minutes April 18, 1914, p302, Special Collections, University of Oregon, Eugene.

<sup>13</sup> *Oregon Daily Emerald*, (Eugene, OR), 7 Feb 1969, 6.

<sup>14</sup> "Statistical Information on the Oregon Dads' Gates project as of February 7, 1941," U.of O. Business Office archive No. 10,172, Box 52, Special Collections, University of Oregon, Eugene.

<sup>15</sup> *Oregon Daily Emerald*, (Eugene, OR), 4 Nov 1949, 6.

<sup>16</sup> *Oregon Daily Emerald*, (Eugene, OR), 7 Feb 1969, 6.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### Statement of Significance (Continued)

Samuel Yellin. Yellin was a very significant blacksmith working at this time out of Philadelphia. Dawson admired Yellin greatly and studied his techniques and work. Yellin's former colleagues showed Dawson how Yellin did his drafting; Dawson adopted the same method himself. During the Depression Dawson got work through the W.P.A.'s Art Project, first designing and producing the wrought iron gates within the new University of Oregon Library. At the same time he received commissions to work on projects at Oregon State University, followed soon after by his commission to produce all the wrought iron work for the great Timberline Lodge. He also produced the Howe Memorial Gates for the University of Oregon, designed by landscape architect Fred Cuthbert. His last project for the W.P.A. was the University of Oregon Dads' Gates.<sup>17</sup>

The original design for the Dads' Gates underwent some minor modifications. Originally the design included the use of native stone pylons, but this was soon changed to forged iron pylons.<sup>18</sup> Dawson wrote in his unpublished autobiography that he felt the design was beautiful and unlike anything he had ever seen: "Somewhat modern and yet designed in such a way that every part had to go through the fire and be forged....When I saw Abbott's design I knew we had something, something that could make these gates the most beautiful campus entrance to be found anywhere in the country."<sup>19</sup> When they were erected Dawson felt he had in fact produced "without question the most beautiful job of wrought iron I had ever seen either in Europe or America."<sup>20</sup>

It is significant to recognize that wrought iron working was becoming a lost art by the late 1930s; the W.P.A. art projects provided a great opportunity for Dawson and others to practice their skills and revive the trade temporarily.<sup>21</sup> Dawson's crew were largely in their 60s and 70s; younger workers had no experience with wrought iron work.<sup>22</sup> Dawson was painfully aware of the loss of his craft in the modern era and he wanted the Dads' Gates to stand as monuments to that craft, writing: "I felt that if the work of the blacksmith was to become entirely obsolete and extinct and disappear for ever from humanity's way of life, then I wanted these gates to be an outstanding example and a tribute to the incomparable skill of that man who once down through the centuries occupied such a prominent place in mankind's journey through the ages."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> O.B. Dawson, "The Old Blacksmiths," photocopy of unpublished autobiography (no date, 1960s?), UA Ref 2, Box 2, Special Collections, University of Oregon, Eugene.

<sup>18</sup> Dawson, 41.

<sup>19</sup> Dawson, 56.

<sup>20</sup> Dawson, 58.

<sup>21</sup> *Oregon Daily Emerald*, (Eugene, OR), 6 October 1939, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Dawson, photocopy missing page number.

<sup>23</sup> Dawson, 57.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### Statement of Significance (Continued)

During the period from 1935 to 1940 Dawson was involved in numerous W.P.A. projects at once. He finished the Dads' Gates in July of 1940 and shipped them from his Portland shop to the University.<sup>24</sup> This was his last project for the W.P.A.; he closed up the shop and traveled to Eugene to erect the Dads' Gates and then went to work in the private sector, eventually going on to work as an estimator.<sup>25</sup> The painting and landscaping of the Dads' Gates was completed later under the direction of Professor F.A. Cuthbert, also the landscape architect for the campus.<sup>26</sup> The Dads' Gates were finally dedicated in a ceremony on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 1941.<sup>27</sup> On top of each of the two main pylons were empty wrought iron frames awaiting glass lighting fixtures; this final element of the Dads' Gates was put on hold.<sup>28</sup> Photos indicate the lights were installed after 1946, and newspaper records indicate the gates were "completed in their present condition" when the University Theater was built in 1949; this probably included the lights.<sup>29</sup>

The 1938 fundraising circular sent out by the Dads' Club to request donations for building the Dads' Gates is specific in its description of a new campus plan. The brochure describes the creation of a "broad mall" with "trees and flowering shrubs" lining the north-south axis from the planned gates to the new library. It promises that: "When you look through the Dads' Gate along the mall to the library building, you will have an unobstructed and inspiring vista, the like of which may not be found on any other western campus." The circular goes on to name both Ellis F. Lawrence and Fred A. Cuthbert as the designers of this campus plan.<sup>30</sup>

However, the plan envisioned by Lawrence and Cuthbert was never fully realized. In 1952, with the construction of an addition to Gilbert Hall, the axis was effectively severed. In 2003 the replacement building for Gilbert, the new Lillis Business School, has restored the axis somewhat. The center portion of the building, standing directly on the north-south axis, has been constructed of transparent glass with the idea that visually the axis will be there. Also, as part of the new construction the Dads' Gates are being looked at for restoration. The Facilities Services department of the University is planning to discover the original color of the Dads' Gates (probably darker than they appear today) and return them to that original appearance. Despite the fact that the Dads' Gates are in need of a paint job and the original axis designed by Ellis Lawrence was compromised by new construction, the integrity of the piece is excellent. They are still in their original location

<sup>24</sup> Letter from Burt Brown Barker, 31 July 1940, Physical Plant archive No. 12,310, Box 9, Special Collections, University of Oregon, Eugene.

<sup>25</sup> Dawson, 65.

<sup>26</sup> "Statistical Information on the Oregon Dads' Gates project as of February 7, 1941".

<sup>27</sup> *Oregon Daily Emerald*, (Eugene, OR), 9 January 1941, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Dads' Club president letter, 5 December 1940, U.of O. Business Office archive No. 10,172, Box 52, Special Collections, University of Oregon, Eugene.

<sup>29</sup> Dads' Gates photos, UA Ref 3, Special Collections, University of Oregon, Eugene. Lee Ramsey, "Dads' Gates Product of Depression Period," *Oregon Daily Emerald*, 23 January 1954, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> "The vista you can help to make come true!" 1938 Dads' Club circular, U.of O. Business Office archive No. 10,172, Box 52, Special Collections, University of Oregon, Eugene.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### Statement of Significance (Continued)

and provide a dramatic campus entrance. Their function as an entrance will be further enhanced with the addition of a Bus Rapid Transit station on 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue in front of the Dads' Gates, coming in the future.<sup>31</sup> The visual axis through the new Lillis building further maintains the intent of Lawrence's plan, if not the actual layout. Finally, the beautiful wrought iron work is all present in its original form; the only addition being the glass lights and subtle mechanical fixtures which were part of the original plans but put off until later.

It is difficult to compare the Dads' Gates with other similar resources; they are a rare example of American decorative wrought iron work from the 1930s and 1940s. As was mentioned earlier, wrought iron work was becoming a lost art at this time. Cast iron, which could be mass-produced, had become the principal material for gates and railings during the nineteenth century; wrought iron was more expensive and took more labor to produce.<sup>32</sup> The advent of new technologies and materials "combined to virtually eliminate the old-fashioned blacksmith in every section of the nation by the end of World War II."<sup>33</sup> The W.P.A. Art Project attempted to turn back the clock and resurrect these skills. A Writer's Project booklet from 1937, titled The Builders of Timberline Lodge, describes how the W.P.A. supported those who had been displaced by new technologies:

Rather than rewarding them for wisdom gained in years of work, our industrial scheme has penalized them. They have been left with but one asset, - skill, and skill appears to be a drug on a mechanized market. Timberline Lodge, with its opportunity for the revival of dormant crafts and arts, offered employment to many men in this classification...<sup>34</sup>

Thus the events of the Great Depression and the Works Progress Administration Art Project are particularly important to Dawson's work; it was this context that provided the opportunity for him to do this work.

In order to gauge Dawson's skills as a master craftsman it is helpful to look at other examples of his work and the work of his contemporaries. Samuel Yellin's work was characterized by a neo-Gothic and neo-Georgian style.<sup>35</sup> Because this results in a new form, his work would differ from "traditionalist" work and would instead be termed "innovative."<sup>36</sup> It is interesting to note that in the fundraising circular sent out by the Dads' Club the design of the Dads' Gates is specifically touted for its difference from most decorative ironwork: "Exterior wrought-iron work has a tendency to seem lacy and delicately scaled...For this reason, the Oregon Dads' Gate will have a heavy framework, with the ornamental portions relatively concentrated in well-defined areas..."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Christine Thompson of Eugene, interview by author, 13 November 2003, Eugene.

<sup>32</sup> Marian Campbell, Decorative Ironwork (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997), 25.

<sup>33</sup> Alex W. Bealer, "The American Blacksmith," in Iron, Solid Wrought/USA. (Carbondale, IL: University Museum and Art Galleries, 1976), 15.

<sup>34</sup> Claire Warner Churchill, The Builders of Timberline Lodge (Portland, OR: Works Progress Administration, 1937), 13.

<sup>35</sup> Campbell, 26.

<sup>36</sup> Campbell, 27.

<sup>37</sup> "The vista you can help to make come true!"

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### Statement of Significance (Continued)

Hence, the intent of the design was to create a work that was incomparable with, or purposefully different from, similar types of work. A useful comparison is found at Timberline Lodge where Dawson designed and created gates with a coyote head motif.<sup>38</sup> This is a good example of a non-traditional and purely original form. Such innovation helps to establish Dawson as a master craftsman in the same league with Yellin.

There is evidence to suggest that O.B. Dawson drew the initial design for the Dads' Gates and that Abbott Lawrence then did the final drawing.<sup>39</sup> Therefore the Dads' Gates can be seen as a collaboration between Abbott Lawrence and O.B. Dawson; the result is specific to this particular collaboration. In his book, Wrought Iron, German blacksmith Fritz Kühn wrote that "Collaboration between architect and craftsman is of considerable importance, because the architect rarely possesses as great a knowledge of the materials used as does the craftsman, while the later, for his part, must, if for instance he is making a set of railings, work within the context of the general architectural plan."<sup>40</sup>

The Dads' Gates on the University of Oregon campus deserve recognition as an object to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. They are historically and artistically significant. The lovely design was produced by collaboration between Abbott Lawrence and O.B. Dawson. The ironwork was then expertly wrought by Dawson, a great master craftsman. It is arguable that if not for the Great Depression and resulting support for such work by the W.P.A., the Gates might never have been commissioned. They are of local significance in particular because of the small number of W.P.A. art projects done in Eugene, and because they are so intrinsically connected with Ellis Lawrence and the University of Oregon. The Dads' Gates were made at a time when such work was rare and few people knew the techniques necessary to accomplish such a project. Each hand-forged piece still stands today as a testament to high artistic values.

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<sup>38</sup> O.B. Dawson, "The Ironwork of Timberline," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 76 (1975): 266.

<sup>39</sup> Earl M. Pallett, Eugene, Memorandum to Mr. Lindstrom, 30 June 1938, WPA Iron Gates and Fence Project Sponsored by the Oregon Dads folder, Business Office Records, #10,172, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR.

<sup>40</sup> Fritz Kühn, Wrought Iron, 2<sup>nd</sup> English ed., trans. Charles B. Johnson (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, 1969), 9.

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## Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Dads' Gates is shown as the dotted line on the accompanying copy of the USGS map. They are located in Section 32, Township 17 South, Range 3 West of the Willamette Meridian in Eugene, Oregon. The boundary includes four feet to both the north and south of the fence located on 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue East between Kincaid Street and Franklin Boulevard on the University of Oregon campus. The entire 120 feet of the fence length is included regardless of whether or not the main gate doors are open or closed; the boundary includes the 10 foot radius arc of the gate doors when opened.

## Boundary Justification

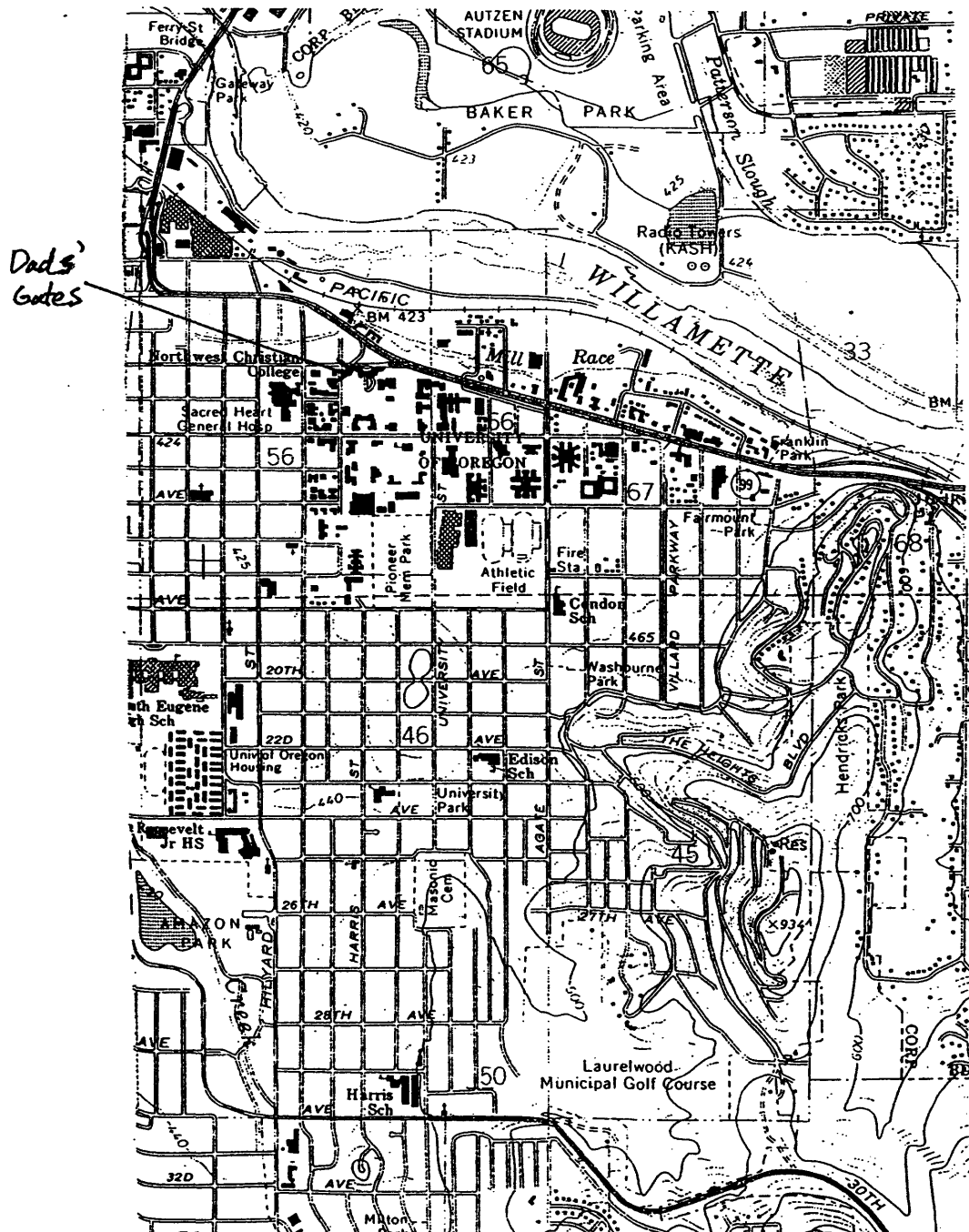
The boundary is the land occupied by the resource and also includes four feet of landscaping to both the north and south. The Dads' Gates integrity depends on some amount of landscaping since they were intended to be, and function today as, a landscape object. Because the Dads' Gates main gate doors are usually kept open, physically separating the two halves of the fence as a whole, the boundary includes the area of land over which the main gates are either opened or closed. As an object the Dads' Gates need only be bounded by the land they occupy; no other resources are included in the boundary.

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Verbal Boundary Description (Continued): Copy of USGS Map with Dad's Gates boundary marked



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