



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20240

December 10, 2010

Notice to file:

This property has been automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This is due to the fact that the publication of our Federal Register Notice: "National Register of Historic Places: Pending Nominations and Other Actions" was delayed beyond our control to the point where the mandated 15 day public comment period ended after our required 45 day time frame to act on the nomination. If the 45th day falls on a weekend or Federal holiday, the property will be automatically listed the next business day. The nomination is technically adequate and meets the National Register criteria for evaluation, and thus, automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Edson Beall

Historian

National Register of Historic Places

Phone: 202-354-2255

E-mail: Edson_Beall@nps.gov

Web: www.nps.gov/history/nr

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 instructions 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 any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural classification, 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 Harmon Park

Other names/site number BF05-418, Harmon Field, Lincoln Park, Chautauqua Park, Third Ward Park

2. Location

Street & number _____ Not for publication ☐

City or town Kearney Vicinity ☐

State Nebraska Code NE County Buffalo Code 019 Zip code 68845

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Michael J. Smith
Signature of certifying official

October 18, 2010
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
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 certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

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): _____

Edson R. Beall 12-10-10

[Signature]
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

Harmon Park

Name of Property

Buffalo County, Nebraska

County and State

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

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	2	Buildings
2	0	Sites
3	5	Structures
2	2	Objects
9	10	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

New Deal Work Relief Projects in Nebraska

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/Outdoor Recreation
RECREATION AND CULTURE/Music Facility
RECREATION AND CULTURE/Sports Facility
LANDSCAPE/garden

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Outdoor
Recreation
RECREATION AND CULTURE/Music Facility
RECREATION AND CULTURE/Sports Facility
LANDSCAPE/garden

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Concrete

Walls Concrete

Roof unknown

Other

Narrative Description

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

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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.)

- ☒ **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.)

Property is:

- ☐ **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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Entertainment/Recreation

Landscape Architecture

Period of Significance

1876-1940

Significant Dates

1876, 1907

1924

1936-1940

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation**Architect/Builder**

McClure and Walker (sonatorium and bathhouse/pool)

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

(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 for 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

Acreage of property 14.5

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	492345	4506198	3.	14	492551	4505760
2.	14	492562	4506189	4.	14	492451	4505764

[X] 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 June Flesner-Becker, Steele Becker, Anne Bauer, Jill Dolberg

organization Kearney Area Preservation Society (KAPS)

date June 7, 2010

street & number 703 West 26th Street

telephone (308) 233-1395

city or town Kearney

state Nebraska zip code 68845

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

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

name/title City of Kearney

street & number 18 East 22nd Street

telephone (308) 233-3215

city or town Kearney

state Nebraska zip code 68445

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined 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 USC 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Harmon Park

Name of Property

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Harmon Park is located in Kearney, Buffalo County, Nebraska, which is 133 miles west of Lincoln, Nebraska's state capital. The park consists of six and one half city blocks in the northwest portion of the city in a residential neighborhood and is adjacent to an elementary school. The park includes features such as a sonatorium (or an outdoor stage), a WPA bathhouse with a pool, tennis courts, ball park, fountain, playgrounds, walking paths and an elaborate rock garden.

The earliest portion of Harmon Park to be donated to the city was called the Third Ward Park, and encompassed the city block from 29th to 30th Streets and 5th to 6th Avenue. Donated in 1876, this portion of the park remains green space with sidewalks creating walking paths and modern park benches at intersections of sidewalks. A modern, non-contributing bronze statue of a man plays checkers with a young girl incorporated into one of the benches.

The second block acquired for the park was purchased to host the local Chautauqua. The block lies just north of the Third Ward Park between 30th and 31st Streets and from 5th to 6th Avenues. This portion of the park contains a formal garden arranged around a central fountain that housed koi fish in the past. The fountain is tiered with a wrought iron rail around the pool of the fountain. Concrete bed liners were laid to outline the geometric patterns of the garden, which are planted in hearty flowering perennials. A non-contributing modern flag pole is situated to the west of the garden, and a non-contributing modern activity center was built to the north within the last decade. The Activity Center was designed with simplified Art Deco elements to be compatible of the sonatorium, which is located to the west nearby. A carved, stone tree trunk with no branches and is situated along the sidewalk west of the Activities Center. The tree trunk is embellished with carved ivy, and is similar to those found in cemeteries as grave markers. It could be that this is a memorial to a citizen of Kearney long since passed away, but there is no longer any indication of the marker's intent.

The 1938 Art Deco style sonatorium is comprised of an elevated stage with sound equipment, and originally with a pipe organ. In front of the stage, a green space was left open for audience seating. The sonatorium is a poured concrete building with horizontal lines in the masonry that emphasize length rather than height. Two towers, one on either side of the stage, contain the sound equipment. Chevrons and fluting details abound on the sonatorium, most notably on the front of the curved stage and the tips of the towers. On each side, open air shelters were attached to the sonatorium and are also built of poured concrete with wood posts. A modern set of playground equipment is located north of the sonatorium.

In 1924, Kearney successfully applied for a grant from the Harmon Foundation to fund the purchase of the four square blocks north of Third Ward and Chautauqua Parks for playground space. The blocks encompass the land from 31st to 33rd Street, and from 5th to 7th Avenues. The city also purchased the north half of the block between 6th and 7th Avenue facing what would have been 31st Street if it had passed through the park. Playground equipment and a horseshoe pitch are located on this land, as well as a New Deal era stone wall and gateway that provides access to both. The block immediately north of the half block by the Park School was left largely to green space, but currently contains a modern non-contributing shelterhouse donated by the Sertoma Club.

The block north of the Sonatorium and the modern Activity Center contains a softball/baseball field that is largely intact from the era of its construction in the 1930s. An arc of trees lines the outfield. A modern sand volleyball court was created close to the sidewalk that follows what would have been 6th Avenue. Located directly north of the ball field on the east half of the block between 32nd and 33rd Streets and 5th and 6th Avenues is a set of six tennis courts. The tennis courts were constructed in cooperation with the WPA and the Elks Club. Although the tennis courts were always located in this configuration in this area, the surfaces themselves are modern and updated. A modern open air shelter and a small building for bathrooms are located between the two sets of three courts. An alley of mature trees lines a sidewalk located south of the tennis courts.

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Located just east of the swimming pool, the National Youth Administration built a lily pond of poured concrete above a forked path and steps with a stone wall. The lily pond was constructed in the shape of a quatrefoil with corners between each "leaf." For some time, the pond functioned well, but it ceased being watertight and was filled to create a flower bed.

The 1936 pool and bathhouse are located on the block to the west of the tennis courts, accessible from 7th Avenue. The bathhouse is a poured concrete building with Art Deco details. The building has long repetitive horizontal lines that emphasize its length. The side facing the pool has some chevron details at the cornice and some curved S shapes that imply splashing water. The building has spaces in the lower level of the building that formerly held the pumps and filters, modern replacements of which have been moved east of the pool outside the fence. The building has a central space for checking in swimmers and holding their personal items, and men's and women's dressing rooms to either side. Exiting the building into the pool yard, there is a patio for watching swimmers and having snacks, and stairs (which are original) and handicap ramps that allow access to the pool below. The sides of the patio feature stepped terraces for sunning and are original to the building. The original pool has been replaced with an Olympic size pool with a tall modern waterslide. A large concrete pad around the pool allows space for sunbathers to bask in the sun.

To the north of the pool and outside of the fence, WPA workers built a retaining wall out of smooth round river rocks, with long benches and a large semi-circular bench incorporated into the wall and overlooking the pool. The retaining wall continues up the hill to the street where steps provide an entrance into the park. A bit further up the hill, one can find the "headwaters" of the 1936 WPA rock garden with its man-made stream. The stream starts with a waterfall at the apex of the hill that runs down through a poured concrete stream bed which curves and falls all the way down the hill toward the tennis courts. The rock garden includes a path of stones laid in concrete, stone steps, eleven bridges over the stream, and stone retaining walls throughout which create flower beds and hold back the hill along 33rd Street. As the stream reaches the bottom of the hill, the water enters a series of ponds with islands. Other stone features are also situated along the path and include a stone pyramid, grotto that once contained a drinking fountain and forms a storage building on the other side of the hill, and most spectacularly, a substantial stone lighthouse with a curved exterior stair. The lighthouse was completed in 1940. Nearby, there is also a boulder with a plaque dedicated to the founding of Harmon Field in 1924.

Overall, the park has a nice combination of spaces for active and passive recreation. Playgrounds, tennis courts, the pool and the ball park provide activities and sports for those who seek exercise and camaraderie in their leisure, while green spaces, the formal garden and the rock garden provide spaces for walks and quiet contemplation. The historic integrity of the park is very good, and while some elements have been updated and replaced over time, the original intent of these park spaces and activities has been honored. The original pool was replaced with another pool. The tennis courts were resurfaced as technology and people's expectations of the facility changed over time. The ball park remains in its original configuration, but a chain link backstop and modern bleachers were installed. In essence, this is still the park that the designers envisioned, but modernized in places.

CONTRIBUTING

Sonatorium	Building	1938
Bathhouse	Building	1936
Third Ward Park	Site	1876 to 1924
Rock Garden	Site	1936
Fountain	Structure	unknown
Concrete flower beds	Structure	unknown
Lily Pond	Structure	1937
Stone Marker for Harmon Field	Object	1924

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Stone Tree Trunk	Object	unknown
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NON-CONTRIBUTING

Activity Center	Building	2008
Tennis Court Bathrooms/Concessions	Building	2000s
Bronze statue	Object	1995
Flag Pole	Object	1980s
Pool & Waterslide	Structure	1980s
East Playground	Structure	1990s
West Playground	Structure	1990s
Sertoma Picnic Shelter	Structure	1990s
Tennis Court Shelter	Structure	2000s

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Statement of Significance

Harmon Park was established beginning in 1876 with a donation of a square block of land, and grew both in size and in features over the next 134 years. In 1907, an additional city block was added to the park to be used for Chautauqua gatherings, and became known as Chautauqua Park. The bulk of the park's growth came in 1924 when the park more than tripled in size, but its expansive development occurred over the lean years of the Great Depression, from 1936 to 1940, through projects with the Public Works Administration, the Works Progress Administration, and the National Youth Administration. The park's period of significance, 1876 to 1940, reflects all of these eras of growth and development.

Throughout the years, Harmon Park has provided for the recreation of its citizens through the presence of playgrounds, wading pools, monkey houses, horse rides, sports facilities, and sculptured gardens. Later, audiences would gather for concerts at the sonatorium, and swimming at the pool. The park is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its historical significance in the area of recreation and under Criterion C in the area of landscape architecture for its variety of designed landscapes. The sonatorium and the bathhouse are also eligible under Criterion C for their architectural significance. The park is being listed under the Multiple Property Documentation Form "New Deal Work Relief Projects in Nebraska."

Narrative Statement of Significance

Recreation. New Deal agencies did much to increase opportunities for the public to play, both by expanding facilities in existing parks and developing new ones. Parks developed through make-work projects offer a tangible record of important New Deal programs, as well as changing public sentiments toward the appreciation of the outdoors and leisure. By the 1930s, the public was extremely interested in the development of recreational facilities such as parks, an interest that went beyond the act of simply setting aside a parcel of undeveloped property as had been done in the past. People came to parks to walk or hike, to picnic, and increasingly to take part in active sports. New Deal park development democratized recreation, opening to the general public opportunities to engage in sports that had largely been available only to members of the country club in previous decades. Due to compelled leisure time during the Depression and a desire to fill free hours, people became more interested in swimming or playing tennis in public parks, or participated in or watched organized sports, or came to the park to hear a public concert outdoors. A city devastated by unemployment needed more parks and recreational opportunities to entertain and distract its populace.

According to the MPD "New Deal Work Relief Projects in Nebraska," most park development centered on the expansion of existing facilities and providing broader access to areas in which recreation might be pursued, which is true of Harmon Park. The size of the park increased substantially just prior to this era, and its development was ensured through the participation of the WPA, PWA and NYA during the ensuing years. The WPA indulged the public's growing interest in active recreational pursuits with the construction of a pool and bathhouse at Harmon Park. In an era when air conditioning was new and often ineffective, swimming and wading was one of the few methods of keeping cool available. In addition, the WPA provided a ballpark, tennis courts and horseshoe pitches for the participation of Kearneyites in active organized sports.

Landscape Architecture. Harmon Park as a designed landscape provides a pleasing balance between open green space, areas of beauty for the passive enjoyment of nature, and sports facilities for active recreation. According to Phoebe Cutler, author of *The Public Landscape of the New Deal*, Harmon Park "could stand as a model for thirties park planning. Its few acres strike an ideal balance of active and passive recreation forms: a large pool and bathhouse, tennis

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courts, and an outdoor amphitheater. A rock garden substitutes for an organized ornamental garden area; nevertheless, the conjunction of garden and sport is typical of the time."¹

One of the most distinctive features of Harmon Park is the rock garden. Natural fieldstone was commonly available from local creeks and streams in Nebraska, and it was used by the WPA and other New Deal agencies in parks to enhance the landscape and draw the eye to the natural beauty of the surroundings. Fieldstone walls, bridges, culverts, stairs, and even lighthouses exemplify the imaginative approach to landscaping using fieldstone throughout the state, and all are present in Harmon Park's rock garden. Citizens were asked to participate in the development of the rock garden by bringing rocks back from their vacations. Rocks were shipped in from the surrounding states, and placed by WPA workers. Although no plans exist, the stream created by the rock garden follows the topography of the land, gently rolling back and forth across the earth to allow water to gently flow down from the "headwaters" of a waterfall, under bridges and around rock obstacles until reaching the ponds at the bottom of the hill. Stone paths provide for a bucolic walkway throughout the garden, and mature and new plantings offer visual interest in the shadow of mature shade trees. Toward the bottom of the hill, workers showed a bit of creativity in laying the path by grouping colors of stones, creating faces and stars in stones set in concrete, and using more unconventional materials such as chain links and broken manhole covers.

Although Cutler says that the rock garden substitutes for the 1930s trend toward ornamental gardens, Harmon Park does in fact possess a formal garden as well. The area around the fountain to the east of the sonatorium is a formal garden with beds set in concrete borders. Interesting concrete sidewalks with hexagonal stepping stones provide a path through the garden. Although the plantings have no doubt changed over the years, the garden itself is well groomed and sculpted in perennials. Its presence adds to the landscape architecture of the park as a whole, and provides a counterbalance to the planned haphazardness of the rock garden.

Architecture. The Art Deco style emerged out of the Paris Exposition Internationale Des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes in 1925. Having emerged from a bitter, modern war just seven years before, the goal of the Paris Exposition was to announce the coming of a new modern age by determining a new, international modern style of architecture and decorative arts. Much like Art Nouveau almost four decades before, proponents of Art Deco rejected decorative vocabularies of the past and chose new geometric and streamlined motifs rather than the classical columns, architraves and pediments of previous styles. The style emphasized simple cubic forms and flat surfaces for their modernity. Art Deco ornamentation accentuated verticality and is mechanistic and linear in nature. Motifs often included faceted surfaces, zigzags, chevron patterns, and octagonal shapes.²

Harmon Park contains two Art Deco buildings: the sonatorium and the bathhouse, both of which are cast concrete with decorative detailing at the cornice. The bathhouse features mirrored chevrons that imply the movement of water, and the sonatorium features horizontal lines and scalloping. While the buildings are not as exuberantly and excessively decorated as many examples of Art Deco architecture found elsewhere in the country, they are a product of their time and location. The lean years of the Great Depression in Kearney would not tolerate such excesses.

Discussion of Multiple Property Documentation Form: New Deal Work Relief Projects in Nebraska. Harmon Park fulfills all of the expectations for park developed largely through work relief projects in the Multiple Property Documentation Form mentioned above. The park started out in Kearney's early history as a park established as green space, but grew through the next fifty years and became a well developed park as the city and New Deal agencies developed its features over time. The park was developed with active and passive recreation areas in mind, including

¹ Cutler, 46.

² Carole Rifkind, *A Field Guide to American Architecture* (New York: the Penguin Group, 1980), 220.

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gardens for walks and quiet contemplation, and sports facilities for participation in individual or group sports. Although several of the sporting features have been updated over the years, this trend is not atypical and integrity of location and setting helps to mitigate the loss of materials. For instance, although the ball park does not retain its original bleachers, the orientation of the ball park is the same, which helps maintain the park's setting and location. Although the materials of the bleachers are different, and a chain link backstop has been built, the intent of the property remains the same, and fundamentally it has not changed so significantly that it is no longer eligible. The same could be said about the modern pool and the tennis courts.

Developmental History / Additional Documentation

The oldest portion of the park, the block between 5th and 6th Avenues and 29th and 30th Streets, dates back to August 7, 1876, when it was given to the city by Thomas Perkins and James Harford "for the sole and only purpose of a public park for the use and benefit of the inhabitants of said city," according to the deed. It was dubbed Third Ward Park, and was so designated for many years. Beautiful trees, grass and flowers, some paths and a few benches were all this park could boast in the early years when its location was near the north edge of the residential section of the city. The name of this park area was later changed to Lincoln Park.

When the Chautauqua was organized for summer entertainment in Kearney in 1907 (Buffalo Tales, Vol. 10, No. 7), the block north of Third Ward Park was acquired by the city for Chautauqua grounds, and from 1907 until 1924 this section of the park was named Chautauqua Park. Beyond these grounds to the north were acres of farm and pasture lands.

In 1924, William E. Harmon of New York City organized the Harmon Foundation for the purpose of lending financial assistance to communities wishing to open playgrounds. Esther Stock Kroeger, secretary of the Kearney Chamber of Commerce, heard of this, and with the assistance of Chamber president Ray E. Turner, made application for a grant from the Harmon Foundation. Fifty communities of the nation received funds to secure fields for playgrounds. Of the 784 towns that applied, Kearney was one of the fifty lucky recipients. The Harmon Foundation donated \$2,000.00 to the city to purchase fourteen acres. The cost was \$2,640.00 and the city put up the extra \$640.00. The land purchased was the four-block area between 31st and 33rd Streets, and between 5th and 7th Avenues. Later the city also purchased the half block between Park school grounds and 31st Street, making the park six and one-half blocks in size, the area it encompasses today. The four-block area purchased by the grant was designated Harmon Field. Among other stipulations established by Harmon Park Foundation, the park was required to operate under this name for five years. Obviously the name endured, and today the entire park is known as Harmon Park.

A Board of Park Commissioners was created by city ordinance in March of 1925. Mayor T. H. Bolte appointed W. T. Souders, Ray E. Turner and G. A. Fairchild to the first park board. During the five-year term of the Harmon contract, the park commissioners entered the National Playground Beautification contest, winning cash prizes each year which were used exclusively for beautification projects. The board started other developments: trees were planted and playground equipment was installed, largely funded through grants from the Harmon Foundation.

Community interest was high. The Kiwanis Club provided a wading pool for children; the Cosmopolitan Club constructed three tennis courts; and the Rotary Club and other civic organizations and individuals made cash donations or equipment contributions. The Kearney Woman's Club placed the first picnic tables in the park. Bill Cave was the first park policeman, appointed in 1926 at a salary of \$75.00 a month. In addition to his police duties, he supervised the installation of the first playground equipment in the park, which included a double slide, merry-go-round, ocean wave and traveling ladder.

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The park also had two croquet and two racket courts on the east side, north of which were the formal flower gardens with a fish pond in the center. The rail around the pond had prongs pointed straight up, but after causing injury to several children, the prongs were all bent over and rounded, and remain so today. Judging from a historic photograph, the prongs were curved well before the 1940s. North of the gardens were at least six horseshoe courts and the ball diamond. A playground was located in the center of the park, north of which were monkey cages, later used for squirrels, pigeons and similar small animals. There was a corral for approximately fourteen ponies owned by the city and taken care of by the Barklund family, whose farm was located at 33rd Street and 4th Avenue. Pony rides were available from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m., from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m., and from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. The rides were offered to children every weekday and on Sunday afternoons. The pony rides were discontinued when plans for the swimming pool in that area were made.

The watering of the two-block wide grassy area from 29th to 33rd Streets became a gigantic job, and in 1932, James K. Harvey was hired to do this work. Small, rounded, "half-moon" sprinklers were used. His wife recalled that it was a demanding and exhausting job. During the hot and dry drought years of the 1930s, Harvey was there from 7:30 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. each day.

The period of the 1930s was one of financial depression when the heat, drought and grasshoppers seemed almost too much to bear. The development of Harmon Field must have been a symbol of hope because in spite of the difficult times, the people of Kearney voted in favor of a local bond issue of \$35,000 to construct a swimming pool and bathhouse on the west side of Harmon Field in 1936. Plans for a modern, up-to-date swimming pool, 160 feet long and 82 1/2 feet wide, with an Art Deco bathhouse, were drawn up by local architects McClure and Walker. However, the project was halted when the city learned they might be eligible for a Public Works Administration grant which would provide a more comprehensive park project. On June 15, 1936, the city applied for a grant of \$28,600. The *Kearney Daily Hub* of June 16 explained, "The \$35,000 swimming pool would be built as planned, and the extra funds spent for a band shell, shelter houses, rock garden and other park improvements, making the project total \$63,600 in all." On September 6, the PWA advised that a grant of \$21,600 had been approved and the project got under way. Henry Knutzen was the general contractor. The pool opened in late June of 1937 and became an immensely popular pastime. The newspaper frequently published information on what to wear and how to behave at the pool. Pool safety was a popular subject as well.

Plans for a rock garden at Harmon Field were also initiated in 1936. The *Kearney Daily Hub* of May 21, 1936 reported on a meeting of the park commissioners who predicted that "Kearney's principal park, Harmon Field, will some day have a beautiful rock garden ... The rock garden may be built much sooner and much more cheaply...if all Kearney residents who travel to mountain country, the Rockies or elsewhere,...will pick out just one or two odd-shaped rocks or stones and bring them back to Kearney, the park would soon have a very good start toward its proposed rock garden." The pyramid of small rocks across the walk from the lighthouse is undoubtedly the result of this suggestion. It is said to contain a rock from every state. The major construction of the rock garden, however, was accomplished through a Works Progress Administration project which was approved September 4, 1936. The project application was signed by Ray Turner, president of the park board, and Joe Elliott, fiscal officer. H. G. Quiggle was superintendent of the park improvement project and George Reiber was construction foreman. Report of the completed project, filed February 8, 1938, listed the work accomplished: 6 horseshoe courts, 6 tennis courts, 8 recreational facilities, 4 retaining walls and revetments, 1200 lineal ft. sidewalk, 14 slopes, berms and terraces.

Rocks and boulders were hauled in by Union Pacific flat cars, free of charge, from Wyoming, Utah, Kansas, North and South Dakota, as well as Nebraska. The largest rock came from the Republican River Valley south of Franklin. The rocks were loaded and unloaded by WPA workers. The story is told of one huge rock weighing 8,400 pounds being moved on a sled through the park and while crossing the stream the rock rolled off blocking the water. It was too heavy to move so workmen dug under it to let the water flow. The rock stayed where it fell and can be seen today.

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In the May 6, 1940 issue of the *Kearney Daily Hub*, in an article setting out the upcoming summer season at the park, the construction of the stone lighthouse was addressed:

Stone is on the ground for the erection of a lighthouse overlooking a portion of the rock garden. It will have a rounding stair. Construction is expected to be under way within 10 days. Incidentally, rocks from the first school, first courthouse and first city hall in Kearney have been used in the rock garden.

This is not all. Keen observers can find lengths of chain, pipe and broken manhole covers scattered amidst the stones set in concrete for the paths. In some areas, stones are grouped by size or color and are laid together. Elsewhere, workers laid faces, stars and other shapes in the stones.

The National Youth Administration (NYA) was a program that attempted to provide aid to the youth in America. It was created in June 1935 by Executive Order 7086, based upon the recommendation of Eleanor Roosevelt. The purpose of this program was to keep young adults from competing for the scarce number of jobs in the general work force. For youth not in school whose families received relief, a work project program was available. Ideally, these projects were to provide some form of vocational training and were to serve both the youth and the community in which they lived. Examples of such projects in Nebraska included landscaping a forty-acre park in Lincoln and the construction of a park in Alliance. In Kearney, the NYA constructed a lily pond directly east of the swimming pool during the summer of 1937. Due to leakage problems, it has since been filled in and made into a rose garden.

In 1938, the PWA provided a grant for the construction of a Sonatorium, or open air theater, in the park. Two shelter houses became the wings for a Sonatorium. On the occasion of its dedication on June 21, 1938, the *Kearney Daily Hub* describes the structure and its equipment:

Kearney's new Sonatorium--was formally dedicated at a program last evening which drew thousands of spectators to Harmon Field Park. The structure is an open-air theater with a broad, sixty-foot open air stage, flanked on either side by tall concrete towers and spreading concrete wings which house an electric sound system capable of being heard for any distance from a few feet up to a mile or two.

This very advanced speaker system was built by the Keller Radio Service of Kearney, and involved highly technical equipment. The east pylon of the Sonatorium where the set was located was full of wires, plugs, knobs and instrument boards. A new electric organ funded by the Junior Chamber of Commerce was installed for the dedication and played by LoDesca Miller. Federal and state PWA, WPA and NYA officials were on hand. Mayor D. Wort expressed thanks to architects McClure and Walker, and to the park commissioners. The national anthem, played on the organ, marked the end of the dedication. Programs at the Sonatorium have since been a summer tradition ever since.

Over the years, the park was known by many names as new parcels of land were added to it. Initially the Third Ward Park, Chautauqua Park and Lincoln Park, there was some confusion about the name. The confusion and uncertainty of the park names was cleared up by action of the City Council on April 17, 1939, by which "Harmon Field and Lincoln Park, immediately adjacent to each other, shall be designated as Harmon Park."

Harmon Park has been a significant feature of Kearney's recreational landscape for 134 years. During its period of historical significance, the park grew dramatically as donations and funds became available. Its recreational and landscape offerings have likewise improved over the years. Today the park offers a venue for music, several sports, recreation activities such as swimming and hiking, and more passive entertainments, such as enjoying the quiet beauty of

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the gardens and rock garden. The park has had the enthusiastic support of the citizenry of Kearney over the generations, as well as an active Parks and Recreation Department that has seen to its continued relevance to their patrons.

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"Arranging for Croquet." *Kearney Daily Hub*, 26 June 1929, pg. 10.

Cutler, Phoebe. *The Public Landscape of the New Deal*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

"Dedicate Pool at Harmon Field: Big Crowd at Program." *Kearney Daily Hub*, 18 August 1936, pg. 2.

"Have Requirements for Playgrounds." *Kearney Daily Hub*, 26 August 1924, pg. 7.

Howell, Alice. "Buffalo Tales." Buffalo County Historical Society, July-August 1988, Volume 11, No. 7, pp. 1-6.

"Linking Up Two Parks." *Kearney Daily Hub*, 10 April 1929, p. 7.

Personal E-Mails from Sharon Stoval and Nelia Greer.

Personal Interviews with Gwen Traxler, Ruth Potter, Jennifer Harvey, and Chandler Lynch.

Public Buildings – Architecture Under the Public Works Administration: 1933-1939. Volume 1, p. 332. New York: New York: DaCapo Press, Inc., 1939.

Carole Rifkind. *A Field Guide to American Architecture*. New York: the Penguin Group, 1980.

"To Dedicate Harmon Field Friday: Invite Public to Be There." *Kearney Daily Hub*, 1 October 1925, p. 2.

"Would Provide Fine Park in Third Ward If The Bonds Carry." *Kearney Daily Hub*, 1 May 1923, p. 2.

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Additional UTMs:

5. Zone 14 Easting 492451 Northing 4505909

6. Zone 14 Easting 492339 Northing 4505913

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

Harmon Park is bounded on the north by 33rd Street, the east by 5th Avenue, the south by 29th Street, and the west by 7th Avenue. With the exception of one and a half blocks on the southwest edge that include Park School and its playground and one row of houses along 29th Street.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

All of the six and one half blocks that have constituted the historic boundaries of Harmon Park are included in the nomination.

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Section photos Page 1

Photographs

Harmon Park. Kearney, Buffalo County, Nebraska.

Jessie Nunn, Photographer. Photos taken 28 July 2010.

Original Negatives at Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office.

Photograph	Description of Photograph	View
1 of 12	Formal garden and Sonatorium	NW
2 of 12	Sonatorium	N
3 of 12	Sonatorium picnic shelter	NW
4 of 12	Retaining wall, NYA lily pond and pool	NW
5 of 12	NYA lily pond (now rose garden)	N
6 of 12	Bathhouse	SW
7 of 12	Waterfall in rock garden	NW
8 of 12	Rock garden with view of tennis courts in distance	E
9 of 12	Rock garden	E
10 of 12	Pond and grotto, tennis courts	E
11 of 12	Lighthouse	SE
12 of 12	Pond and noncontributing gazebo	E



Harmon Park
Kearney, Buffalo County
BF05-418

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Name of Property _____

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Name of multiple property listing (if applicable) _____

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 10001002

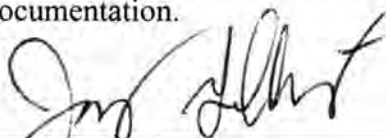
Date Listed: 12/10/2010

Property Name: Harmon Park

County: Buffalo

State: NE

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.



Signature of the Keeper

12/10/2010
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 2: Location

The address of this property is:

Roughly bounded by 29th and 33rd Streets and 5th and 7th Avenues.

Section 5: Classification

The Category of Property is hereby amended to **District**

The Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file

Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Harmon Park

MULTIPLE NAME: New Deal Work Relief Projects in Nebraska MPS

STATE & COUNTY: NEBRASKA, Buffalo

DATE RECEIVED: 10/25/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/30/10
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 12/15/10 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/10/10
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10001002

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 12/10/2010 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Listed administratively through Federal Register problem

The nomination has technical problems, solved with SLR

There was no Cover Document for this, though it cites one
The SHPO forgot to mail cover; it will be mailed soon.
64501098

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept All

REVIEWER J. Gabbert DISCIPLINE

TELEPHONE DATE

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR ☒ Y ☐ N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



Harmon Park

Photo 1 of 12



Harmon Park

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Harmon Park

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Harmon Park

Photo 12 of 12

HARMON PARK
KEARNEY, BUFFALO COUNTY
NEBRASKA
USGS: KEARNEY

ZONE 14

A: E: 492345
N: 4506198

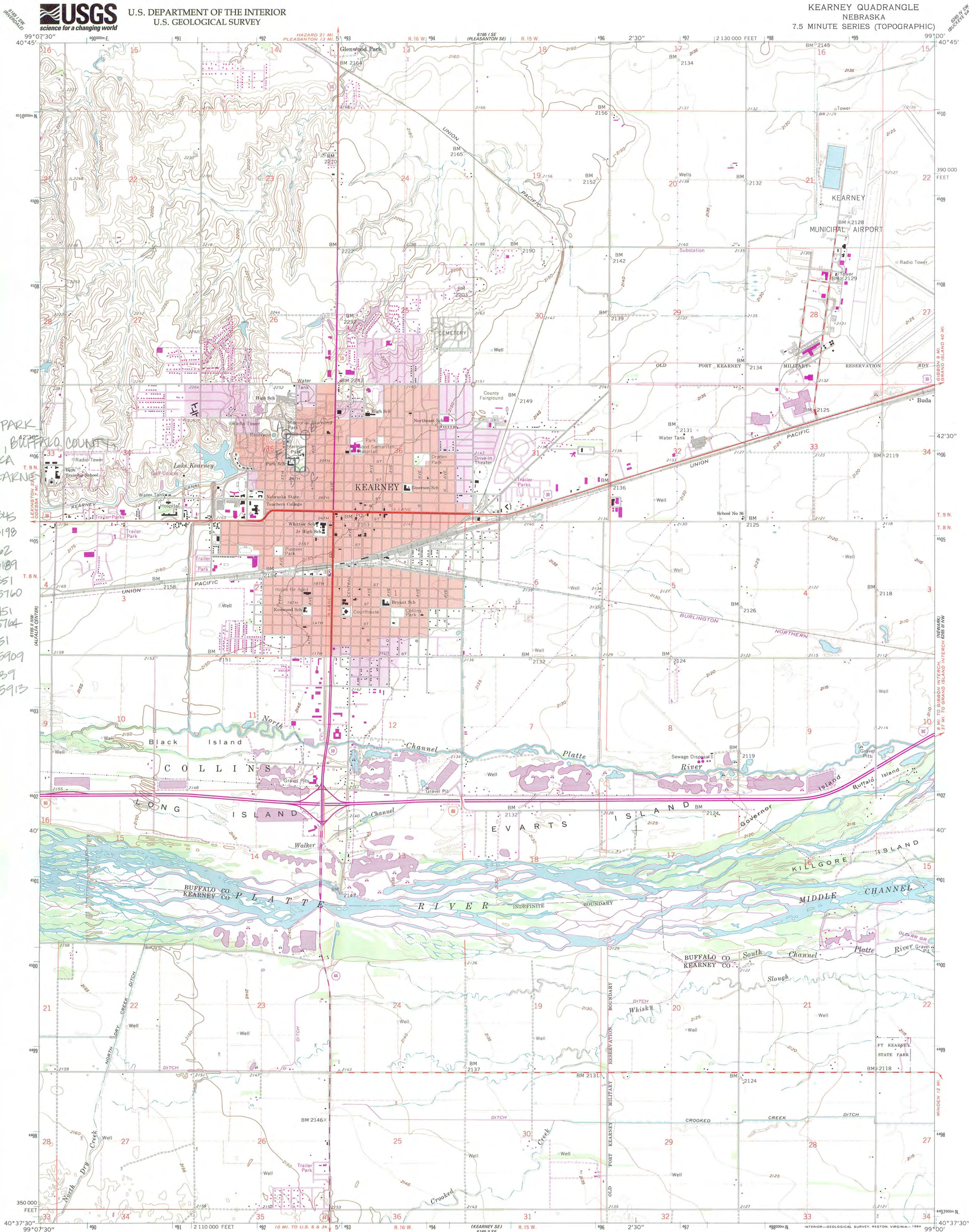
B: E: 492362
N: 4506189

C: E: 492351
N: 4505160

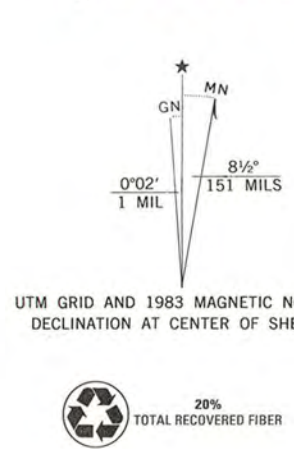
D: E: 492451
N: 4505164

E: E: 492451
N: 4505909

F: E: 492339
N: 4505913



Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey as part of the Department of the Interior program for the development of the Missouri River Basin Control by USGS, USC&GS, and U. S. Bureau of Reclamation Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1951 and planetable surveys 1962 Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum 10,000-foot grid based on Nebraska coordinate system, south zone 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 14, shown in blue Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983, move the projection lines 4 meters north and 32 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks



SCALE 1:24 000
1 000 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 FEET
1 0 1 KILOMETER
CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 5-FOOT CONTOURS
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———
Interstate Route U. S. Route State Route

KEARNEY, NEBR.
N4037.5—W9900/7.5
1962
PHOTOREVISED 1983
DMA 6165 II NE—SERIES V875





October 19, 2010

J. Paul Loether
National Register—National Historic Landmarks Programs
National Park Service
1201 "I" Street NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

RE: Harmon Park
Kearney, Buffalo County, Nebraska

Dear Mr. Loether:

Please find enclosed the National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the above resource. This form has met all notification and other requirements as established in 36 CFR 60.

If you have any questions concerning this nomination, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "L. Robert Puschendorf". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

L. Robert Puschendorf
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosure

1500 R Street
PO Box 82554
Lincoln, NE 68501-2554
p: (800) 833-6747
(402) 471-3270
f: (402) 471-3100
www.nebraskahistory.org