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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 on 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 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 Camp Dodge Pool District

other names/site number Camp Dodge Swimming Pool Complex

2. Location

street & number Buildings A-22-A24, Camp Dodge [N/A] not for publication

city or town Johnston [N/A] vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Polk code 153 zip code 50131

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 [X] statewide [X] locally. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official/Title

1/9/95
Date

State Historical Society of Iowa
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 the 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] Signature of the Keeper
Elson H. Beall
Entered in the National Register 2/17/95 Date of Action

Camp Dodge Pool District
Name of Property

Polk, Iowa
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		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
3	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
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
RECREATION: sports facility
DEFENSE:military facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
RECREATION: sports facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
Late 19th and early 20th Century movements

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation CONCRETE
walls STUCCO OVER TILE BLOCK
roof ASPHALT
other BRICK

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
See continuation sheet, section 7, page 1

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 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 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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

MILITARY

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

ENGINEERING

Period of Significance

1922-1944

Significant Date

1922

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Pearse, Robinson and Sprague

Nielsen, William N.

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Bureau of Historic Preservation

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Camp Dodge Pool District, Polk County, Iowa

Narrative Description

The Camp Dodge Pool District consists of a 2.3 million-gallon concrete Swimming Pool, stucco Bathing Pavilion, and concrete block Concession Stand. The Iowa National Guard Swimming Pool and Bathing Pavilion at Camp Dodge were built in 1921-22 to provide recreation for Iowa National Guardsmen and also for public use. They remain relatively unaltered. When constructed, the Pool was among the largest in the country, if not the largest. However, by 1923 a tank more than twice its size (6,300,000) gallons, was completed in San Francisco. Designed to accommodate between 1,000 and 2,000 bathers, the sheer size and early construction date of the pool are noteworthy and clearly illustrate the planned size of the Iowa National Guard encampments during the 1920s, as well as the high importance placed upon wholesome recreation both for civilians and the military.

The reinforced concrete swimming pool is rectangular with rounded corners and measures 150' x 350', large enough to easily accommodate a large, fixed square raft located in the deep end of the pool (photos #1,2). Depth ranges from approximately 2'6" to around 9'. Subsequent applications of concrete to alleviate leaking have lessened the depth somewhat. Two high metal chairs for life guards complete the aquatic scene. Diving boards pictured in earlier photographs have been removed over the years due to deterioration and liability factors. In addition, the fixed raft was originally free-floating so that it could be removed during swimming competitions. The floating raft also originally sported a diving tower.

The painted stucco Bathing Pavilion is one-story and roughly 41' x 190' (photos #1, 3,4). Its placement at the deep end of the pool complements the water scene and allows an unimpeded view of the countryside. Two squared sections for the showers (49' x 41') flank a long (103') rectangular section to form an enveloping crescent shape. Four regularly spaced dormers have rounded tops and screened openings to provide ventilation. Small round windows, now enclosed, also framed with brick, occur at the gable ends of the shower rooms. Brick, painted brown, is laid soldier style (as befits a military installation) and frames windows and openings. With its bold columns, exposed rafter ends, stucco over tile block construction, rounded dormers, and appealing porch, the pavilion conveys a Craftsman-Style influence.

The fine open porch between the shower rooms is evocative of hot summer days, making the cool wetness of the pool all the more inviting. Designed for summertime lounging, the porch features ten stucco columns (and a pilaster at each end) with attractive simple brick capitals. Above the capitals are simple decorative wood rafter ends painted brown.

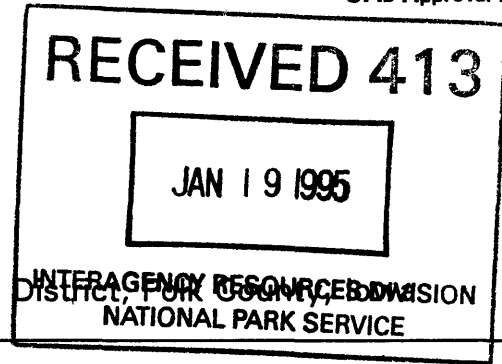
Original plans for the Pavilion show that the flanking shower rooms were intended for enlisted men (west) and officers (east). Dressing rooms were located in the long rectangular section in the center. However, by 1942 and probably in the 1920s, three bays of the dressing room area were partitioned off in the east end to provide space for women during the civilian use of the pool. Since there were separate shower stalls consisting of concrete block partitions, the officers' shower was well suited for the conversion (photo #5) In contrast, the enlisted men's shower is a single open space with shower heads on the outer walls. The check room, which is accessible through small lobbies at either end of it, runs the length of the porch.

Many original interior elements of the simply designed facility remain, including the check room with its hundreds of metal baskets on slatted wood shelving, swinging double doors, and painted wood benches and partitions.

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Section number 7 Page 2 Camp Dodge Pool District, Park County, Division



Narrative Description, Continued

The small (32' x 51') Concession Stand was added in the late 1930s (photo #6). Blueprints are dated 1936, and the 1942 survey of Camp Dodge also gives that date. Current National Guard records place construction at 1938. The building was constructed as designed, with the significant substitution of concrete block for the more costly stone. Painted white, the Concession Stand has a longer hipped roof section that intersects with a gabled rear portion. Openings have been screened, and the building has few alterations.

The complex nestles against a steep ridgeline, and the topography slopes sharply away behind the Concession Stand. Bathers enjoy basking on the west-facing grassy hillside, an unusual feature for pools. The broad expanse of river valley unfolds leisurely west of the ridgeline and the pool site. Above the pool and pavilion is a curving drive and parking for motorists arriving from N.W. Beaver Drive above and east of the site. The crescent shape of the Bathing Pavilion echoes this attractive siting. A chain link fence encloses the facility for safety, and there are approximately 5' concrete walks around the pool and leading to the bathing pavilion.

Alterations are minimal and part of normal maintenance procedures. In 1942 the pool still lacked special filtration equipment, although chlorine was pumped into the water. Unlike modern pools, the Camp Dodge Pool was a "fill and draw" pool. Fresh water was repeatedly added and the overflow drained into the Camp Dodge sewer system. Now a modern filtration system has eliminated the need for continual fresh water. In the 1960s the present filtering system was added to the western end of the bathing pavilion. This small gabled addition continues the shape and materials of the pavilion. The pavilion's leaky tile roof was replaced with asphalt shingles. Shrubbery shown in a 1942 photographs has been removed as has a diving tower.

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Section number 8 Page 3 Camp Dodge Pool District, Polk County, Iowa

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Camp Dodge Pool District is historically significant due to its association with Iowa's military history and its continuing use by the local community.

The relatively unaltered swimming pool and bathing pavilion illustrate post-World War I Iowa National Guard activities. As one of the largest outdoor pools in the nation in the 1920's - and perhaps the largest - the pool and pavilion call attention to early twentieth century belief in the value of recreation. The attractive design, hillside siting, and unusually large size and early construction date lend additional areas of architectural significance to the district consisting of pool, pavilion and concession stand.

A recent architectural and historical survey of Camp Dodge revealed significant early twentieth century interest in the salutary effects of recreation and other wholesome activities for the military. World War I-era literature is filled with such phrases as "human welfare environment of the soldiers," "social work at Camp Dodge," and "soldier's moral, physical and mental welfare." Raymond B. Fosdick, chairman of the U.S. War Department's Commission on Training Camp Activities, wrote Iowa's Governor William L. Harding in 1917 on just such a topic. Noting that "the spirit of the men must be raised to the highest level of soldierly devotion," Fosdick noted that his commission, along with such groups as the Playground and Recreation Association of America, were interested in providing "wholesome recreational and social necessities" for the men in World War I cantonments, such as that at Camp Dodge. Swimming pools were one of the facilities Fosdick cited as important.

Organized recreational athletics was of such importance that Camp Dodge officers named a Division Athletic Director in September 1917, the month recruits first arrived at the World War I Cantonment there. Soldiers stationed at Camp Dodge were also interested. Draftee Alvin O. Johnson filled out a card on his leisure interest for the camp and wrote, "an artificial swimming tank" as well as tennis courts would be appreciated.

After the November 11, 1918, Armistice, Iowa and America began the conversion to a peacetime footing. The Iowa National Guard was reconstituted and again required space for annual training encampments. Camp Dodge ended its role as a federal cantonment for training tens of thousands of draftees in the National Army and returned to its original use, an Iowa National Guard training facility. With the end of World War I the federal government no longer wanted to maintain the sixteen cantonments designed as temporary training centers around the country.

Recognizing that Camp Dodge now contained important improvements from its use as a World War I federal cantonment - concrete roads, sewer, water and electrical system - the State of Iowa began negotiations with the federal government to pay for these changes. In addition to these improvements, the State determined that 667 buildings of the 3,000 constructed on the expanded Camp Dodge Cantonment were on the 570 acres the State owned¹. Negotiations dragged on, due to considerable delays at the federal level, until March 1922. The State of Iowa then purchased the improvements made to Camp Dodge for \$35,808.95.

¹ The remaining buildings were on land the federal government had purchased or leased

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Section number 8 Page 4 Camp Dodge Pool District, Polk County, Iowa

Narrative Statement of Significance, Continued

Despite the delays, Iowa Governor N.E. Kendall was confident that an agreement between the state and the federal government would eventually be made. In his capacity as Commander-in-Chief of the Iowa National Guard, Kendall appointed a five-man Board of Officers to inspect Camp Dodge and make recommendations regarding its return to Guard camp status. In 1921 the board found, not surprisingly, that Camp Dodge was eminently suited to be a Guard Camp and recommended some immediate changes: build a fence, repair roads, provide storage for motor vehicles, and landscape the grounds. In addition, the Board noted in its June 3, 1921, report to the Governor "that in order to properly equip the permanent camp grounds at Camp Dodge, that a swimming pool 150 yards in length by 50 yards in width should be provided...."

With Kendall's approval, the Iowa National Guard proceeded immediately with these construction plans and commenced planning with the designers of the facility, Pearse, Robinson & Sprague. On June 27, 1921, the Board of Officers opened construction bids for the pool and pavilion and also selected the site, "the upper locations."

In response to a charge of "bad engineering practice" regarding the pool, Governor Kendall asked the Iowa State Highway Commission, whose engineers were familiar with concrete, bridges, and water and earth pressures on same, to comment on the engineering aspects of the pool plans. These early charges were based on initial specifications that were revised, and it appears that the concerns were addressed with modifications, such as having a shallower pool and thicker retaining walls.

At their August 2, 1921, meeting, the Board decided that the deep end should walls 10" thick. They also directed Pearse, Robinson & Sprague to prepare plans for the bathing pavilion to "contain dressing rooms, for officers and enlisted men, check rooms, shower baths and toilets." By this time, excavation work was underway, having begun by July 20. The pool and pavilion were built generally according to plan except for the pool length, which was reduced from 450' (150 yards) to 350".

Pearse, Robinson & Sprague received the commission for the design of the bathing pavilion and the swimming pool in 1921. In the years before 1927, formal certification through the Iowa Board of Architectural Examiners was not required, and the firm offered architectural, engineering, and landscape architectural services. The combination was a useful one for Iowa National Guard leaders, for construction of the pool required application of all those specialties. The firm was known as Pearse, Robinson & Sprague in the early 1920s but between 1924 and 1928 was called Pearse-Robinson. Francis A Robinson was a prominent member of the landscape architectural profession in Iowa. Among his commissions was a study of the Clay County Fairgrounds in Spencer. There is little information known to date about Rube J. Pearse or Harold G. Sprague. The designer of the pool was L.N. Hintgen, working from the offices of Pearse, Robinson and Sprague. Hintgen wrote an article concerning the pool design in the Engineering News-Record, which appeared in September of 1923. At that time Hintgen was the city engineer in Sioux City, IA. Contractors for the pool construction was the firm of Stark and Knotts, low bidder at \$33,102.

Sugarman Construction Company was the contractor for the bathing pavilion. According to longtime Des Moines builder (and principal contractor for the 13th Divisional Cantonment at Camp Dodge during World War I) Rudolph Weitz, Abe Sugarman learned bricklaying as an apprentice for the Benson & Marxer construction firm in Des Moines. In the 1930s he moved to Chicago where he received work from Montgomery Ward.

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Section number 8 Page 5 Camp Dodge Pool District, Polk County, Iowa

Narrative Statement of Significance, Continued

In his report to Governor N.E. Kendall for the period ending June 30, 1922, Adjutant General Louis Lasher reported that the swimming pool was "completed with the exception of final grading, roads and work of that description." He also noted that the bathing pavilion was nearly complete and would be ready in time for the annual Guard encampment held in August, 1922. Cost of the pool amounted to \$33,102, with the grading and landscaping increasing the total to an estimated \$50,000-55,000. In the 1924 Adjutant General's annual report, the pool was valued at \$54,450 and the pavilion at \$32,531.

The immense swimming pool and bathing pavilion were not completed when the Iowa National Guard held its first post-World-War I encampment in August of 1921. During the 1920s, officers in the Iowa National Guard, worked diligently to encourage enlistment. In a 1921 newspaper account, Adjutant General Lasher described the annual encampment as a "fifteen-day period of fun and wholesome military training." He noted the considerable advantages of participation, including being paid while in this "fifteen-day vacation," rifle practice on the "best located and equipped rifle range in the middle west," and the fine recreational feature, such as the swimming pool under construction.

Lasher's efforts bore fruit. An estimated 3,000 enlisted men and officers attended the two week encampment in August of 1922. The new swimming pool proved to be a popular place for off-duty recreation; an estimated two-thirds of the men used it daily. One soldier had to be rescued from the pool when "nearly 700 soldiers were cooling off in the pool after the extreme heat of the day," according to a 1922 newspaper account.

A near drowning was not the only problem with the pool. In June 1923 the Adjutant General had to report to Governor Kendall that the pool leaked. A crack had developed running from near the top of the west pool wall down to the footing. The Governor was dismayed at this turn of events and ordered "the most rigid investigation." In a letter to Adjutant General Lasher, Kendall confided, "You and I would be utterly ruined if the walls should develop any substantial defect." Experts from Iowa State College felt that the leaks occurred through expansion joints between the concrete panels. Some modest leakage continued, but the engineers were untroubled. They also pointed out that water should be left in the pool year around to keep the concrete an even temperature, a sound practice that solved the problem.

The Iowa National Guard intended that the swimming pool and bathing pavilion be available for public use, but concluded it was inappropriate for the military to operate the pool under those circumstances. In 1923, the Play Ground Association of Des Moines agreed to operate the pool when the Guard was not using it for its annual encampment. The organization dated from 1918 and had developed from a women's club project that established and supervised the first playground in Des Moines. Although the pool was outside the city limits of Des Moines, the association realized that its presence benefited Des Moines residents. Now known as the Des Moines Recreation Association, the group continues to manage the Camp Dodge pool and pavilion.

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Section number 8 Page 6 Camp Dodge Pool District, Polk County, Iowa

Narrative Statement of Significance, Continued

In the days before air conditioning as commonplace, the pool at Camp Dodge remained a popular recreational spot for Guardsmen and civilians alike. In the late 1930s the present concession stand was added, a federal public works project. It probably replaced a modest wood frame "building for serving lunch at pool" valued at \$75 in 1924. William Nels Nielsen, a Des Moines architect between 1932 and 1970, was the recipient of WPA-era commission at Camp Dodge, including the concession stand. The firm of Nielsen & Baty also designed the stone fence, entrance, and octagonal guard house that graces the main entrance to Camp Dodge. Nielsen graduated from Iowa State University (then College), in 1925 with a degree in architectural engineering and worked for the respected Des Moines architectural firm of Tinsley, McBroom & Higgins between 1925 and 1931.

The pool at Camp Dodge was so large that the Iowa National Guard bought a row boat for it. With such an immense facility, it was natural that superlative claims have surfaced. To date, the only early reference to size was found in the Adjutant General's 1930 annual report to the Governor which noted that "the swimming pool is one of the largest in the world." Conversations with national recreation organizations and swimming pool consultants have unearthed no definitive statements. All agreed that it was likely that the pool was, at the very least, among the largest built in the 1920s in America. By way of comparison, the outdoor pool built in Los Angeles for the 1984 Olympics was only 173' x 75', with a 900,000 gallon capacity; Camp Dodge measure 150' x 350' and holds approximately 2.3 millions gallons of water. The facility remains popular. Each year, up to 50,000 swimmers use the swimming pool, bathing pavilion, and concession stand at Camp Dodge.

The bathing pavilion even gained mention in the National Geographic's coverage of the great midwestern floods of 1993. Because Camp Dodge had its own uncontaminated water supply, The Iowa Guard opened the pavilion's shower facilities to Des Moines area residents whose water supply had been destroyed by the flood waters.

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Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 7 Camp Dodge Pool District, Polk County, Iowa

Bibliographical References

SHSI = source located at State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines.

CD = source at Camp Dodge.

- Long, Barbara Beving. "The Historical and Architectural Development of Camp Dodge, Iowa." 1988-9. Survey conducted for Army Corps of Engineers.
- Governor William L. Harding Papers. File 237. Fosdick to Harding, October 31, 1917, also A.O. Johnson card. SHSI.
- Report of the Adjutant General of Iowa. Des Moines: State of Iowa, [1922].
For 7/1/20 - 6/30/22. SHSI.
- Report of the Adjutant General of Iowa. Des Moines: State of Iowa, [1924].
For 7/1/22 - 6/30/24. SHSI.
- Governor N.E. Kendall Papers. Files 403, 405. Includes reports to the governor from the Board of Officers. SHSI.
- Survey of Camp Dodge - Herrold, Iowa to Determine the Present Condition of the Premises for Transfer from the State of Iowa to The United States of American under Lease Dated May 23, 1942. CD.
- Blueprints. Bathing Pavilion. CD.
- Blueprints. Concession Stand. CD.
- Des Moines Capital, June 9, 1921; June 14, 18, 1923.
- Des Moines Register, May 29, 1985.
- Des Moines Tribune, August 14, 1922.
- Architects in Iowa File. Bureau of Historic Preservation. SHSI.
- Interview with Katherine Kreig, executive director, Des Moines Recreation Association, November 19, 1988.
- Metal plaque on south wall, bathing pavilion.
- Telephone interview with representatives of National Recreation and Park Association, National Spa and Pool Institute, Pool and Spa Dealer News, and pool consultant Joe Hunsaker, January 1989.
- Hintgen, L. N., "Large Open Air Swimming Pool at Camp Dodge, Iowa," Engineering News-Record, 91:13 (September 27, 1923), 518-519.
- "How World's Largest Swimming Tank Was Built of Concrete," Concrete, 23 (October 1923), 152-153.
- "The Largest Swimming Pool for Ten Thousand Swimmers," Scientific American, 129 (September 1923), 403.

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Section number 10 Page 8 Camp Dodge Pool District, Polk County, Iowa

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description:

Site includes the bathing pavilion, concession stand and pool, along with the surrounding fenced-in area. Located at the eastern edge of Camp Dodge, the site is bounded to the north and east by 9th Street. See line drawn on base map.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the swimming pool, bathing pavilion, and concession stand that have historically been part of the swimming pool complex at Camp Dodge and that maintain historic integrity. In addition, sharp changes in topography set the site apart from the immediate surroundings.