

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



021

# 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 Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District

other names/site number Mini-Waken, Mini-Wauken, Minne-Waukon

### 2. Location

street & number 24490 100<sup>th</sup> Street N/A  not for publication

city or town Spirit Lake  vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Dickinson code 059 zip code 51360

### 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        locally.

Barbara A. Metcher  
Signature of certifying official/Title - Deputy SHPO

December 21, 2009  
Date

Iowa 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):

Edson H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper  
Date of 2.17.10

Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Name of Property

Dickinson County, Iowa  
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 |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>1</u>     | <u>0</u>        | buildings  |
| <u>1</u>     | <u>0</u>        | sites      |
| <u>5</u>     | <u>2</u>        | structures |
| <u>0</u>     | <u>0</u>        | objects    |
| <u>7</u>     | <u>2</u>        | Total      |

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

CCC Properties in Iowa State Parks: 1933-1942

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions  
(enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE/Outdoor Recreation  
LANDSCAPE/Park

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Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE/Outdoor Recreation  
LANDSCAPE/Park

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**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Park Rustic

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Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Stone

roof: Asphalt

other: Wood/Log

Narrative Description

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

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa

### NARRATIVE

The Mini-Wakan State Park is 12.5 acres, located north of the city of Spirit Lake, Dickinson County, Iowa, on the north shore of Big Spirit Lake. It is less than one mile from the Minnesota state line and approximately three miles north of downtown Spirit Lake. Constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) from 1933 to c. 1936, the Mini-Wakan State Park retains a collection of rustic architecture commonly associated with park design during the CCC era. The park retains a total of nine resources: seven from the original CCC work and two—the boat ramp/dock and the two-post suspended sign—which are c. 1960.

Over the years variations of the spelling of Mini-Wakan have been published. They vary from the spelling that is now used, *Mini-Wakan* to *Mini-Waken*, *Mini-Wauken*, and *Minne-Waukon*. The Sioux name was literally *Mini* (sacred) *Waken* (water). The name is that which was originally applied to Big Spirit Lake, or rather to the whole chain of lakes, by the Sioux Indians. It was known to early settlers in this region, but never used to designate the big lake. The final name, Mini-Wakan, was chosen based on research conducted by a retired park ranger, Dave Stoever (who worked most of his career in the Spirit Lake, Iowa, area). Mr. Stoever found in the July 6, 1933, *Spirit Lake Beacon*, "Mini-Wakan, the Sioux name and spelling for Spirit Lake, was chosen for the name of the new state park at the north end of the lake." The spelling was settled on, as it was designated as the proper spelling in a study recently completed Professor F. I. Herriott of Drake University, whose writings have appeared in the *Annals of Iowa*.

### DESCRIPTION

Development of the Mini-Wakan State Park included construction of a stone picnic shelter, stone steps and benches at the water's edge, stone entrance pillars, and a footbridge over an inlet; construction of trails, parking areas, and picnic grounds; rip-rapping, graveling, and fencing; placing guard rail along the road; and beach improvements.<sup>1</sup>

### Surrounding Area

There are a few residences fifty yards to the east of the picnic shelter, outside of the boundaries of the park. The park is bordered on the south, west, and northwest by Spirit Lake; on the north by Highway 2 and the Minnesota state line; and on the east by private cottages and houses. The area is still mostly undeveloped, covered with natural grasses and trees.

### Individual Contributing Resources

Contributing resources constructed by the CCC are indicated by numbers and circles on Map 5.

<sup>1</sup> "Four New Parks Available for Public in Dickinson County This Season," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (June 7, 1934).

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Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa

### *Picnic Shelter (contributing building)*

The picnic shelter is located within Mini-Wakan State Park, on the southern end of the park and the northwest corner of Big Spirit Lake. The picnic shelter is a T-shaped building with a cross-gable roof. The structure is reached primarily from a paved entrance and driveway that are both curvilinear. There are no sidewalks either circumnavigating the building or leading to any of its outside entrances. The building is surrounded by grass. On the southeast corner is a cornerstone, which reads: "Built by Camp Okoboji S.P. 9, 1934." The building was originally to be fifty-seven by twenty-seven feet in size; however, the base of the T was constructed for an additional room forty-eight by twenty-five feet in size and open on three sides. The T shape still exists. Native rock was used in the construction, with the exception of the native wood ceiling in the room with the fireplace. The rock was hauled to the site from nearby farmland outside the park so that the area itself would not be disturbed. Very few split rocks were used on the exterior, so that the finished structure would have a natural appearance.<sup>2</sup> On the north and south sides of the building, on the portion that was originally used as the picnic shelter, are split-stone paved patios that are rectangular in shape.

### *Steps and Benches (contributing structures)*

There is one set of steps. They are on the north bank of the water to the east of the picnic shelter. They lead gradually down the embankment to the water. There is a bench on each side of the steps. Both benches are intact. The steps and benches were built to appear as natural as possible. They are barely visible from the picnic shelter; there is not a constructed path to the top of the staircase.

### **Alterations**

The picnic shelter originally had a bath house in the north enclosed room and within the walls of the current picnic shelter. It is fifty-seven by twenty-seven feet. It has been determined that it was altered c. 1970 and the space was opened up to accommodate additional picnic space, as the need for a bath house had lessened.

### **Noncontributing Resources**

Noncontributing resources not constructed by the CCC are indicated by letters and squares on Map 5.

|   | Noncontributing Resources | Type      |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|
| A | Boat Dock                 | Structure |
| B | Two-post suspended sign   | Structure |

<sup>2</sup> "CCC To Develop [sic] The Lake Region," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (February 1, 1934).

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Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa

|   | Contributing Resources | Type      |
|---|------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | Entrance Pillars       | Structure |
| 2 | Roadway                | Structure |
| 3 | Landscape              | Site      |
| 4 | Picnic Shelter         | Building  |
| 5 | Steps                  | Structure |
| 6 | Benches                | Structure |
| 7 | Trails                 | Structure |

### *Road & Entrance Pillars (contributing structures)*

The park is approached by Highway 2, which is nine-tenths of a mile long. Highway 2 runs east from M49, which is just west of the lake. There is one automobile entrance into the park, on the north side, directly off Highway 2. The entrance road runs perpendicular to Highway 2. There are four stone entrance pillars that flank the entrance: two on the east side and two on the west side. A two-post suspended sign is to the west side of the entrance. A parking lot is near the shelter.

### *Landscape (contributing site)*

The landscape at Mini-Wakan State Park includes beautiful natural timber; trails, which are a contributing feature of the landscape and the park; and wildlife habitats. The landscape is not flat but has a gentle roll with curvilinear features such as the driving path and trails that work with the landscape.

The CCC naturalistic design principles dictated the use of indigenous plant materials and stone work; careful site placement of the structures (picnic shelter, steps, and benches); and preservation of the character of the land along the north bank of Spirit Lake. Principal features of the designed landscape at Mini-Wakan State Park include structures skillfully sited into the wooded-prairie landscape with benches and steps (with minor disturbance to the surrounding natural topography), the use of native stone to integrate the structures with the surrounding landscape, and the practical and aesthetic use of native plant materials.

### *Trails (contributing structure)*

A simple system of trails is present in the park. They were intended to be plainly visible to visitors, while appearing to be as natural as possible. The trails are accessible from the within the park. Two trails lead to the picnic shelter, others to the lake, and still another to the nonextant bridge and across the inlet. Rather than being made straight and austere as a cement sidewalk, they follow the natural contour of the land.

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Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa

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### *Boat Dock and Ramp (noncontributing structure)*

The boat dock and ramp were constructed c. 1960 at the edge of Big Spirit Lake to the southeast of the picnic shelter. They are primarily concrete and are noncontributing resources to the district.

### *Two-Post Suspended Sign (noncontributing structure)*

A two-post suspended sign is to the west side of the main entrance of the park. The sign is painted and in yellow letters reads: "Mini-Wakan State Park, Department of Natural Resources." The sign was constructed c. 1960.

### **Non-Extant**

#### *Bridge*

The foot bridge was built across the inlet to Spirit Lake, at the Mini-Wakan State Park. The bridge was a forty-foot bowstring truss with boulder-faced piers and rustic wood floor and handrails. The bridge floor was of logs.<sup>3</sup> According to DNR staff, this structure was destroyed by the constant erosion as a result of the rough water and other natural causes c. 1945.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Incinerator*

The exact location of the incinerator is unknown. It is known that it was located to the northwest of the picnic shelter. It is also unknown when it was removed and why.

#### *Vault Toilets*

The exact location of the two vault toilets is unknown. It is known that they were "near the boat ramp." It is also unknown when they were removed and why. Portable toilets are now to the northwest of the boat ramp.

### **Archeology**

This nomination includes resources that are above ground; however, further research may uncover potential archeological significance.

### **Site Topography**

The site topography consists of natural and gradual contours that are neither flat nor rolling hills. The topography allows for the picnic shelter to be near the water while avoiding potential flooding and contact with the water. The topography allows for the visitor to experience the buildings and structures on-site as well as to be near the water without one overpowering the other.

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<sup>3</sup> "Rustic Foot Bridge to Span Site of Rock Dam at Inlet to Spirit Lake," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (February 15, 1934).

<sup>4</sup> Stoever, Dave (Park Ranger). Conversation with Sheriffa Jones. Milford, IA, April 29, 2008.

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### Integrity

The structures at Mini-Wakan State Park included a picnic shelter with a bath house (exterior walls remain), bridge (destroyed by the freeze/thaw cycle of the lake, rough water, and other natural causes), steps, benches, and the stone entrance pillars. The park also has a landscape that contributes to the built structures. The remaining structures exist in the same size and form as when they were constructed.

All seven aspects of integrity of the Mini-Wakan State Park have been maintained at a high level. The location of the park remains unchanged. Original characteristics of the CCC work and rustic park architecture still remain. The natural setting of the picnic shelter, steps, and benches, as well as the curvilinear roadway and natural materials, still remain. The distinctive features that identify the park and its building, site, and structures as CCC era work—specifically, the picnic shelter, stone entrance pillars, steps, and benches—remain unaltered. The use of local stone and logs remains a major feature of the park and its structures and building. The major changes include the loss of the bridge and vault toilets and the integration of the bath house as part of the picnic shelter. There is a large majority of original material, design, workmanship, location, feeling, association, and setting still visible.

The Mini-Wakan State Park (designed by the CCC and Amos Barton Emery), including its buildings, structures, and site, possesses integrity of:

*Location:* The primary landscape features defining the historic district at Mini-Wakan State Park, including buildings, the circulation system, vegetation, and detail elements such as the use of native boulder entrance pillars and split-faced boulder steps and benches, are in their original locations.

*Design:* The original spatial organization for the site, including land-use functions and activities, are intact. Although snow and erosion damage have necessitated work, the framework and intent of the original scheme are evident. The original combination of buildings, structures, and the site remain, in spite of the loss of a few resources.

*Setting:* The landscape surrounding the Mini-Wakan State Park remains virtually intact and appears much as it did during the significant historic period. The picnic shelter with bath house, steps, and benches sited along the bank of Spirit Lake retain the rustic architectural appearance intended by the original developers, architects, and designers. The surrounding vegetation continues to define the state park and landscape. Views to the lake from the picnic shelter remain unchanged.

*Materials:* The original native stone and wood materials remain. These materials are still intact on the contributing resources, especially the entrance pillars, picnic shelter, steps, and benches. Very few of

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Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa

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the original materials have been changed. In addition, plant materials are compatible with the historic site and many of the plantings are remnants from the historic period.

*Workmanship:* The craft of the CCC workers is evident in the use of engineering and construction techniques that were new at the time. This is evident in the picnic shelter, where they experimented with the use of rough-faced stones (on the interior and exterior of the south part of the picnic shelter) as well as split stones to create smooth walls (on the interior of the north part of the picnic shelter). The craft and construction are also evident in the mortar and rock configuration of the picnic shelter, entrance pillars, steps, and benches. Finally, the use of native split wood to create a ceiling on the south side of the picnic shelter shows the workmanship of the CCC workers.

*Feeling:* The historic district possesses a distinct character, evoking a sense of an earlier era in which great thought went into the design and development of the park district and how it should and would fit into the surrounding environment. The buildings, structures, site, materials, and organization all contribute to the rustic feeling associated with the district.

*Association:* Mini-Wakan State Park continues to function as it did historically, as a place where families could gather to picnic and access the largest natural lake in Iowa, Big Spirit Lake. It still serves as a place to observe the fauna and flora of the area. The historic district continues to reflect its associations with the CCC and the rustic style of design through its buildings, structures, circulation system, materials, and organization.

### Future Plans

The Spirit Lake Protective Association, in partnership with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office, is working toward restoration and rehabilitation of the Mini-Wakan State Park picnic shelter and rehabilitation of the steps and benches. Plans include the addition of an open picnic shelter connected to the current shelter. This addition will have restroom facilities, both all-weather as well as seasonal. In addition, windows and doors will be restored and a kitchenette will be added in the existing picnic shelter. The architect and designers have followed *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* in reference to the addition. The use of these guidelines and the collaboration with the State Historic Preservation Office Historian and Preservation Consultant will ensure that the changes made to the building will not adversely affect the original design and craftsmanship of the CCC picnic shelter. While the addition will introduce new materials, design, and workmanship, following *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* will ensure that the original CCC-designed elements are not diminished with the new addition.



Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Name of Property

Dickinson County, Iowa  
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).

- 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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- ARCHITECTURE
- CONSERVATION
- LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
- GOVERNMENT
- SOCIAL HISTORY
- RECREATION

**Period of Significance**

1933-circa 1936

**Significant Dates**

1934

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Emery, Amos Barton  
Civilian Conservation Corps

\_\_\_\_\_

**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 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: Iowa Department of Natural Resources

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Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as a locally significant, relatively unaltered example of work of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and as a piece of architecture designed by Amos Barton Emery, a well-known Iowa architect who worked on Depression-era projects. Mini-Wakan State Park and the buildings and structures retain their original setting and relationship to the park's circulation system as built by the CCC. The park is also a good example of a CCC-designed park landscape of the Depression Era. The period of significance of the park is from 1933 to c. 1936.

### The Formation of Mini-Wakan State Park

The *Spirit Lake Beacon* of April 6, 1933, announced that a road (Highway 2) would soon be constructed that would allow the public to drive all the way around Spirit Lake without the necessity of driving five extra miles up into Minnesota and back again.

In late May 1933, the State Executive Council approved the construction of the new road on the north shore of Spirit Lake. This is the road that is today commonly referred to as the "grade road." A contract for \$6,800 to move 36,000 cubic yards of fill was awarded to J. G. Everist's Western Asphalt Company of Sioux City. The construction cost of the bridge was not included in this contract.

The state property was valued at \$1,500 at the time. It included 12.5 acres that were purchased and given to the State of Iowa by residents and civic groups of the region in 1933 and a long, narrow point of ground between the park and the Crandall's Lodge properties to the east.<sup>5</sup> Crandall's Lodge properties are both permanent houses and vacation cottages. The actual development of the park site began during the fall of 1934 under the general direction of the national and state park services, through the Civilian Conservation Corps. Emergency conservation work was of interest to residents of Dickinson County and others interested in the lake and the park.<sup>6</sup>

Development of the Mini-Wakan State Park included construction of a stone picnic shelter, stone steps and benches at the water's edge, stone entrance pillars, and a footbridge over an inlet; building of trails, parking areas, and picnic grounds; rip-rapping, graveling, and fencing; placing guard rail along the road; beach improvement; and creation of a holding plot for public areas nursery stock.<sup>7</sup> It also included removal of dead and diseased trees; building of picnic tables, fireplaces, rustic benches, and a dock; and planting of trees and shrubs.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> "CCC To Develop [sic] The Lake Region," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (February 1, 1934).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> "Four New Parks Available for Public in Dickinson County This Season," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (June 7, 1934).

<sup>8</sup> "General Improvement of Lakes Planned by CCC," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (October 26, 1933).

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Dickinson County, Iowa

On June 1, 1933, the 165 enrollees of Civilian Conservation Corps Company 778 arrived at Spencer after an initial recruiting phase at Fort Des Moines. During their stay in Spencer, the camp was housed in tents at the Clay County Fairgrounds. Twenty to twenty-five young men were housed in each tent.

During that first summer, the camp was involved with several projects which benefited or established state parks within a fifty-mile radius of Spencer. In the Iowa Great Lakes Region, stone steps were constructed at Sunset Beach and the canal entrance near the Crescent Beach Hotel on West Okobojo was dredged. At newly acquired Mini-Wakan State Park, picnic areas were developed along with parking areas and the adjacent nursery. The camp enrollees also helped gravel the newly constructed "grade road" leading to the park and put extensive riprap along the shoreline facing Spirit Lake. Also that summer, permanent barracks were constructed on a site near the present-day Milford airport. On October 23, 1933, the 165 enrollees of Company 778 were transferred from Spencer to Milford.

The February 8, 1934, issue of the *Spirit Lake Beacon* reported that the picnic shelter at Mini-Wakan State Park was under construction. It said that 130,000 trees had been ordered to reforest the state park properties after the CCC workmen cut down dead and diseased trees.

During 1934, stone picnic shelters were also being built at Pike's Point and Trapper's Bay State Parks. Trails and other stone structures were constructed at Mini-Wakan and Pillsbury Point State Parks. Work was continuing on the picnic shelter at Mini-Wakan State Park, and the completion of the trails was included in the work.

Permanent improvements amounted to over \$25,000 and advanced the twenty-five-year program of the State Board of Conservation by several years. The program of improvements had followed a definite outline made by the board of conservation, the state fish and game commission, and the national forestry department, under the direction of Ray W. Jones, works superintendent.<sup>9</sup> The CCC Camp's work on Silver Lake in Lake Park was the most important, since they practically had to reclaim the lake. Next in importance in the works program were a number of projects at West Okobojo and Spirit Lake. M. J. Smith had been placed in charge of the development of the new park area, Mini-Wakan, at the northern end of Iowa's biggest lake. By November 1933, the workmen had cleared five acres of timber land, constructed two picnic tables, and built 8,750 linear feet of three-strand fence around the area.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> "Conservation Camp Boys to Advance 25 Year Program of Conservation Board," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (November 2, 1933).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

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Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa

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The value of the construction by August of 1934 was about \$37,000. This included the values of the Mini-Wakan State Park picnic shelter, the Pike's Point park picnic shelter, and the new picnic shelter at Gull Point.<sup>11</sup>

### Road and Entrance Pillars (contributing structures)

The road at Mini-Wakan was built during the summer of 1933 on contract with the board of conservation, which accepted the site for the State of Iowa early in May 1933. Rip-rapping and graveling of the new road had been done by the CCC workmen during the winter of 1933-1934. Rock was blasted from the "old dam."<sup>12</sup>

A parking lot large enough to provide for ten vehicles was built near the entrance. Automobiles and other vehicles were prohibited from entering the remainder of the park area. Two reasons were given for this rule: wildlife will not inhabit an area that is continuously used by automobiles and other vehicles, and these park areas are to be preserved in the natural state insofar as possible, which includes preservation of wildlife.<sup>13</sup>

### Landscape (contributing site)

These areas will be so carefully developed that anyone who wishes, including naturalists, Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, may visit them to continue studies of plant, insect, and animal life.<sup>14</sup>

This was a summary of the policy that was followed in the development of Mini-Wakan State Park on the north shore of Big Spirit Lake, as well as other areas in Dickinson County and Iowa. Considerable concern had been expressed locally about the development of the Mini-Wakan area and of the proposed new park at Gull Point on West Okoboji Lake. Both were among the most beautiful areas of native timber left standing on the shores of the lakes. The general public sentiment seemed to be for preservation in the natural state. The preservation of these public areas for future generations in as near the natural state as possible was the object and purpose of the development of Mini-Wakan State Park under the guidance of the National Park Service and the State Park Service during the CCC. Every detail of the park development aimed to permanently preserve the natural timber sites and protect wildlife while providing for public enjoyment of them.

The landscape of Mini-Wakan State Park is as significant to the park design as the buildings and structures are. The landscape designer blended the elements of roads, trails and paths, buildings,

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<sup>11</sup> "C.C.C. Lists Expenditures of \$325,226.52 to Date," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (August 23, 1934).

<sup>12</sup> "CCC To Develope [sic] The Lake Region," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (February 1, 1934).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

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Dickinson County, Iowa

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structures, and the native flora into a fluid design. The design of Mini-Wakan State Park followed many of the principles that guided the design of national parks. The development of Mini-Wakan State Park was "a good example of the work being done and to be done, to provide for public use and enjoyment."<sup>15</sup>

While the buildings at Mini-Wakan were public facilities for tourists and nontourists alike, the overall park design required the landscape designer to understand the relationship between the buildings, steps and benches, and the lake, and to blend these into the vegetation and plantings of the park. The trails are disguised with vegetation when viewed from the areas accessible by the automobile, but also clearly evident to the hiker. The entrance, trees, and layout of the curvilinear driving/walking paths do not expose the picnic shelter to the viewer upon entering the park. Instead, the picnic shelter is experienced and viewed gradually by the viewer because of the landscape designer's use of park-design principles and natural contours.

The landscape designer and laborers succeeded in blending the finished buildings and structures into the landscape. They did this by clearing out the majority of dead and diseased trees, while leaving some of them to let nature blend the old with the new, as though everything had a place. They also added appropriate prairie plants.

### *Beautiful Natural Timber*

A visit to Mini-Wakan State Park convinces one that the timber lies as it has for decades, perhaps even hundreds of years.

No imagination is required to realize that the trees have grown from nature's own planting to become stately and tall . . . replaced by nature's own phalanx of trees and that man has had no part in its growth, or its possible destruction.<sup>16</sup>

### **Trails (contributing structure)**

Constructing trails at Mini-Wakan State Park progressed rapidly. The trails were constructed of sand, which was held in place by split rock.<sup>17</sup>

A system of trails was built into the park. While they were intended to be plainly visible to visitors, they were also to appear to be as natural as possible. Rather than being made straight and austere as a cement sidewalk, they followed the natural contour of the land.

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<sup>15</sup> "CCC To Develope [sic] The Lake Region."

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> "Shelter House at New Mini Wakan State Park," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (February 15, 1934).

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### *Protection of Wildlife*

A nursery plot was planted in the park area during the fall of 1933 to provide trees for replacement in the public properties of the region. The nursery remained until the late 1940s. Shelter for pheasants and wild fowl had been built, and every effort was made to leave the wildlife as undisturbed as possible.

Originally, the public beach was about 1,000 feet long and was cleaned of rubbish that had washed up. The beach is one of unusual beauty, and any preparation necessary to make it accessible to the public was not to damage the natural appearance in any way.

Picnic grounds with tables, as well as the picnic shelter furniture, were all of rustic design. E. W. Thorson, Camp Okobojo superintendent, stated that

only dead and diseased trees and shrubs were being removed. In some cases, dead trees are left as they fell, to enhance the natural beauty of the place. There was to be no trimming of natural trees or shrubs. Wild flowers and grasses, in fact, everything with the park, was to be left as undisturbed as possible and yet allow the public to enjoy the privileges afforded to this beautiful woodland tract.<sup>18</sup>

### **Picnic Shelter (contributing building)**

The picnic shelter at Mini-Wakan State Park was to be one of the finest in the state and was built to blend naturally into the woodland as though it were a part of nature's plan. An allotment of \$3,000 was made for the structure.<sup>19</sup>

The 1934 picnic shelter is an excellent example of rustic architecture and utilized innovative engineering advancements in the curing of concrete. The Mini-Wakan CCC Picnic Shelter was built by the CCC workers of Camp 778. The architect was Amos Barton Emery. The engineer on site during construction of the shelter was E. W. Thorson. Concrete for the Mini-Wakan picnic shelter was poured during the winter of 1934 by the CCC workmen and construction of the stone walls started soon after. It is one of two CCC-built picnic shelters in the area, the other being the one at Gull Point State Park. The Mini-Wakan picnic shelter is one of the three largest buildings erected by the CCC workmen from Camp 778.<sup>20</sup>

Ground was broken for the picnic shelter during the last week in January 1934. The building was fifty-seven by seventy-five feet in size, built in a T shape. Native rock was used in the construction,

<sup>18</sup> "CCC To Develop [sic] The Lake Region."

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> "C.C.C. Lists Expenditures of \$325,226.52 to Date," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (August 23, 1934).

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with the exception of the roof which was to be "stained to blend with the surroundings."<sup>21</sup> The picnic shelter was completed with a hand-made latch fashioned after the pattern of ancient door locks. The design was made by Edward L. Tyler, engineer in charge, and worked out by Clinton Barnes, a local woodsman with the camp. The latch was made of matched pieces of native walnut.<sup>22</sup>

A huge stone fireplace was built into the south end, and a small counter and supply stand were enclosed on the west side. The building was to have been completed by April 1, 1934, less than three months after the ground breaking, but it was not finished until June of that year.<sup>23</sup>

The method of curing the boulder-faced walls of the building is believed to be an innovation in winter construction and drew considerable attention from engineers in the northwest Iowa. The method used three batteries of double boilers made from six large oil drums. These drums were set in pairs on parallel hook-ups. The boilers were

set on temporary foundations over pits in which a fire was kept for 12 hours every night. When work was completed for the day, the walls were covered as tightly as possible with tarpaulins and the steam was piped under the coverings to the rock walls. A series of 1-4 [one- to four-] inch holes were placed every foot along the pipes and discharged the steam to cure the mortar and prevent freezing of the walls. This secured the most preferable cement cure, known as the moist cure. Heated materials were used in the walls and the boilers were operated only at night.<sup>24</sup>

The method was devised by Superintendent E. W. Thorson, a civil engineer, with very little expense for materials.

Superintendent Thorson intended to use this method of curing on all of the cement work to be done by the camp workman during the winter of 1933-1934. The usual method of curing was by means of hot-air heaters, and in most cases of construction similar to that done by the camp workmen, heat was provided by a threshing-machine engine. Owing to the fact that such meager allowances were made for materials, the steam-heat method was devised to utilize materials at hand without added expense.

Conservation workmen Kenneth Gleason and Albert Swales volunteered for the novel experience of camping out during the winter. The young men lived at the park, where they were responsible for

<sup>21</sup> "CCC To Develope [sic] The Lake Region."

<sup>22</sup> "Gull Point Shelter House Being Built," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (August 16, 1934).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

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firing the boilers and keeping the boulder walls warm through the night. The buildings in which they lived were later converted into toilet facilities for Mini-Wakan State Park. They began their "camping out" job February 1, 1934, and remained on duty until the walls were completed.<sup>25</sup>

### Steps and Benches (contributing structures)

Steps leading to the beach were constructed in 1934 as work on other structures proceeded. They were constructed of split-faced native rock.

### Bridge (nonextant)

The bridge was built across the inlet to Spirit Lake, at Mini-Wakan State Park. The location of the bridge was such that waves carried through the opening by southerly winds broke upon the point of land that jutted out into the slough from the east, just north of the bridge. The bridge was a forty-foot bowstring truss with boulder-faced piers and rustic wood floor and handrails. The footings for the piers were extended down into the hardpan clay floor through ten feet of peaty muck. The bridge was only a few feet higher than the rock dam, and was designed to fit harmoniously and naturally with the landscape and rustic surroundings. Rock was piled into the muck at the base of the piling, and the concrete footings were then poured into the rock and muck and reinforced with steel. The pier was constructed on this footing.<sup>26</sup> The bridge floor was of logs. According to DNR staff, this structure was destroyed c. 1945 by the constant erosion caused by rough water and other natural causes.

### The New Deal and the Civilian Conservation Corps

In the 1930s, during the Great Depression that followed the stock market crash of October 1929, a large number of young men were unemployed. The Civilian Conservation Corps was proposed during the Franklin Roosevelt administration as a means to put up to 500,000 unemployed men to work. This was also seen as an opportunity to provide states with a way to develop new state parks and to restore lands, rivers, or lakes damaged by erosion.

On March 31, 1933, President Roosevelt signed legislation establishing the Civilian Conservation Corps. To implement this plan, the Army was placed in charge of providing housing, clothing, and meals for the enrollees in the CCC. The National Park Service was to provide work sites and tasks for the young workers to complete. These workers were paid \$30 per month, with \$25 of this pay sent home to their families.

<sup>25</sup> "Shelter House at New Mini Wakan State Park," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (February 15, 1934).

<sup>26</sup> "Rustic Foot Bridge to Span Site of Rock Dam at Inlet to Spirit Lake," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (February 15, 1934).



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CCC-era work must also be placed in the broader setting of what was occurring at the time throughout the country, which included, "the Depression, conservation, recreation, park movements, the New Deal and the operation of the CCC at the federal level."<sup>27</sup>

### Life and Authority at a CCC Camp (778)

Members of the CCC were sometimes referred to as "being in the woodpecker army."<sup>28</sup> The official staff consisted of a commanding army officer, two assistants, a camp surgeon, the works superintendent, and his six technical assistants. The full company strength was 200 men. In Iowa, the army staff was headed by First Lieutenant Theodore Kalakuka, 14th Cavalry, of Fort Des Moines, commanding officer and the only regular army officer on the camp staff. First Lieutenant Morris, infantry reserve, was supply and police officer; Second Lieutenant John N. Shortley, Cavalry reserve, was mess and personnel officer; Captain D. N. Fulks was camp surgeon; and Superintendent Ray W. Jones, a state conservation engineer, was the head of the emergency conservation work department. The staff personnel included E. W. Thorson, civil engineer; chief of staff Alfred K. Freidrich, mining engineer; V. W. Flickinger, landscape architect; M. J. Smith, forester; E. P. Sylvester, plant pathologist; and Ned Perrin, agricultural engineer.<sup>29</sup>

### Superintendents of CCC Camp 778

Ray W. Jones, Superintendent of the Civilian Conservation Corps camp, served the Okoboji-Spirit Lake region until E. W. Thorson took over as superintendent. Ray W. Jones was promoted to a state and federal position as supervisor of eleven Iowa camps.

Superintendent Thorson was a graduate of Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, and Iowa State College in Ames, Iowa. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree at Augustana where he majored in mathematics. He graduated from the civil engineering department at Iowa State College with honors, receiving a Bachelor of Science degree, and was elected to membership in Tau Beta Pi fraternity, an engineering fraternity, and Phi Kappa Phi, a national honor fraternity.<sup>30</sup>

### Engineers of CCC Camp 778

Joe White of Spencer, a construction engineer, was added to the technical staff of Superintendent E. W. Thorson at Camp Okoboji. He was in charge of the stonework projects and the building of picnic shelters at Mini-Wakan State Park, Pike's Point State Park, and Silver Lake State Park. The

<sup>27</sup> Joyce McKay, "Civilian Conservation Corps Properties in Iowa: 1933-42" (Multiple Property Submission, prepared for the State Historical Society of Iowa, Office of Historic Preservation, 1990), Section E, 1.

<sup>28</sup> "A Close-up Story of the Civilians Conservation Corps Camp at Milford," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (November 30, 1933).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> "Lake Region to Receive Direct Benefit from Conservation Corps," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (December 28, 1933).

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technical staff included eleven engineers by mid-February 1934. Other engineers included C. M. Reading of Churdan, Edward L. Tyler of Des Moines, and A. H. Mayne of Council Bluffs.<sup>31</sup>

Working in conjunction with the engineers and other CCC staff and workmen was Amos Barton Emery, architect for the Mini-Wakan State Park. In spite of extensive research, it is still unclear whether Emery was in Washington, D.C., or actually on site during construction of the picnic shelter. His name appears on the architectural plans, as does that of draftsman Kenneth L. Hayes.

### Amos Barton Emery

Amos Barton Emery was born in Norton County, Kansas, in the northwestern part of the state on January 15, 1895. The Emery family moved to Des Moines around 1901. In 1913, at the early age of eighteen, Amos began working for Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson. In 1917, he enlisted in the Army, received a second lieutenant's commission, and served as a pilot during World War I. While overseas he attended the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, associated with the Atelier Gromort. He was one of fifty American architects who seized this opportunity, part of a number of educational programs developed for U.S. troops idle after the Armistice of November 1918 and waiting for transportation home. Architects in the group could enroll in any one of three Ecole des Beaux-Arts studios for four months and receive a certificate of credit.<sup>32</sup>

Emery left the army in 1919 and was married that year to Alice Victorine Cusson. In 1922, Emery received a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania. During vacations from 1919 to 1921 he worked for Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson, and from 1922 to 1923 he worked as a draftsman for George R. Post and Sons in New York City. He came back to Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson in 1923 and became designer and chief draftsman.<sup>33</sup>

Emery went into private practice with John Normile as Normile & Emery in 1927 or 1928. In 1930 he served a term as president of the Iowa Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Normile & Emery was dissolved in 1930, and in 1932 Emery found work in Washington, D.C., through his friend Jay "Ding" Darling, the cartoonist for the *Des Moines Register*, who served briefly as head of conservation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture.<sup>34</sup> Gradually, Emery came to be in charge of more than 200 architects designing structures for national parks and conservation areas. Many of these structures were built during the latter part of the Great Depression by the Civilian Conservation

<sup>31</sup> "Shelter House at New Mini Wakan State Park," *Spirit Lake Beacon* (February 15, 1934).

<sup>32</sup> Wesley I. Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 59.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> "The Editorial Cartoons of J. N. 'Ding' Darling," Iowa Digital Library, <http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/ding/who.html> (accessed December 7, 2009).

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Corps. Emery's position was Senior Refuge Planner, U.S. Biological Service, and Senior Inspector, National Park Service. He left Washington in 1937.<sup>35</sup>

When Emery returned to Des Moines, he entered into partnership in 1938 with H. Clark Souers as Souers & Emery. This partnership continued for almost four years. In 1941 and 1942 Emery served again as president of the Iowa Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. As World War II began to limit nongovernmental building construction, Emery took a job as supervising architect with the Cedar Rapids firm of Howard R. Green Co., Architects and Engineers, from 1942 to 1945. After the war, he worked as construction architect for the [Des Moines] Register & Tribune Company from 1945 to 1949. During 1947 and 1948 he was visiting architectural design critic at the Department of Architecture and Architectural Engineering at Iowa State College. During winter quarter 1949 and probably during spring quarter he was an instructor in the department.<sup>36</sup>

As building construction picked up, Emery returned to private practice in partnership with Sewell Mathre, a recent Iowa State graduate. Emery's last position was with Brooks Borg Skiles as on-site construction inspector of a government building in Iowa City. He died on the job in 1973.<sup>37</sup>

Emery was responsible for designing projects all over the state of Iowa. Specific projects include the Legionnaire Building and the Leo Weeks house in Des Moines; a residence for Irv Garland in Oskaloosa; a residence for Ralph Neppel in Carroll; and the Algona POW prison camp.

### Park and Landscape Design and Rustic Architecture

By 1917, the National Park Service explored the development of rustic architecture, and by the 1930s the style dominated architecture in the parks. According to Joyce McKay,

CCC park properties represent the [rustic] style in its mature form. It is an integral part of the general conservation/park movement which gained its widest expression through CCC labor. The concepts of the style are intimately intertwined with the prevailing notions guiding park design.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Wesley I. Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 59.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Joyce McKay, "Civilian Conservation Corps Properties in Iowa: 1933-42" (Multiple Property Submission, prepared for the State Historical Society of Iowa, Office of Historic Preservation, 1990), Section E, 2.

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McKay notes that

Iowa's park movement developed along with the national movement. The promotion of early conservationists led to the creation of the State Board of Conservation in 1917. In 1929, the state employed a superintendent of parks who possessed an engineering background to supervise the daily operation of the parks and execute the plans and policies of the board. . . . Until 1918, the state owned no park lands. In that year, they purchased 1300 acres in what became Backbone State Park. By 1922, the Board of Conservation administered 13 additional parks. But, the board did not gain an appropriation for land purchases and development until 1923.<sup>39</sup>

According to the Multiple Property Submission form prepared by Joyce McKay in 1934, Mini-Wakan was classified as a Lake Reserve with 18.5 acres and by 1942 it was expanded to 20.13 acres.<sup>40</sup>

McKay reminds us that

[t]he two purposes of parks were to ensure the preservation of examples of the nation's natural environment and provide areas for relaxation and recreation away from the growing strains of modern life. Increasing emphasis was placed on the inspirational qualities of parks. Away from the urban center they refreshed the mind and spirit. The public works programs of the Roosevelt era enabled the development of a state and national park program across the nation.<sup>41</sup>

In addition, by the early 1930s outdoor sports were becoming more popular, and facilities such as bathhouses, beaches, and camping areas necessary.<sup>42</sup>

Linda McClelland discusses how the development of park design responded to the expanding park service's programs of natural-history interpretation, forestry, engineering, and recreation while conforming to a design ethic based on landscape preservation and harmonization. The principles of naturalistic or informal landscape design were adopted as the chief means for blending new construction with the existing natural setting. These principles included

the preservation of existing natural features and vegetation, the selection and en-framing of vistas, the screening of obtrusive elements, the planting of native species, the use of local native

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<sup>39</sup> McKay, Section E, 9-10.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., Section E, 16.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., Section E, 20.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., Section E, 22.

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materials and traditional or pioneer methods of construction, and the avoidance of straight lines and right angles in all aspects of design.<sup>43</sup>

All of these principles were put in practice in the design and development of Mini-Wakan State Park, through the use of native rocks donated by local farmers, the use of native prairie plantings and trees, and the avoidance of straight lines. These elements can be seen in the meandering, curvilinear trails and paved walking and driving paths. In addition, the picnic shelter (specifically its stone patios) blends into the landscape of the park.

While national park designs followed the guidelines more diligently than did state park designs, state park system designs nevertheless frequently mimicked the national parks. Beginning in 1924, Congress granted appropriations annually for the development of roads and trails in national parks.<sup>44</sup> McClelland points out that principles of landscape preservation and harmonization, rather than prototypes, were followed in the external design of these structures. She also notes that "structures took on a unique character as construction followed and blended with the natural landform and character of each site, and as native materials and pioneering techniques of a region were employed."<sup>45</sup>

Landscape designers and architects received guidance from several publications that provided models and principles for designing park structures and landscape. The landscape architect's role was to select a route that provided access to the park, at the same time offering the best views of scenery. Their challenge was to do this without destroying the beauty of the park scenery.<sup>46</sup>

The publication *Landscape Conservation* (1935), for example, provided guidance on blending the edges of plantations, lakes, and artificial ponds through a process of studying and recreating naturalistic zones of native vegetation based on soil, moisture, climate, and natural associations.<sup>47</sup> Parks across the country should not have the same vegetation. The state of Oregon should plant ferns and other flora, while parks in Iowa should use woody vegetation, such as oak trees and prairie flowers and grasses, near water. Designers implemented naturalistic park design. The purpose was to create an illusion in the minds of visitors that the landscape had never been disturbed,<sup>48</sup> that it was almost as if

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<sup>43</sup> Linda Flint McClelland, *Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916 to 1942* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1993), 1.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

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the buildings and structures had been dropped into the landscape by Mother Nature and construction had never occurred.

### *Landscape as Design*

Prior to the development of guidelines and master plans for national parks by the National Park Service, landscape designers such as Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. had developed principles for park plans. Olmsted's ideas were influenced by the writings of English landscape architect Humphrey Repton and the American Andrew Jackson Downing. Another early landscape designer who shared planning principles with Olmsted, Repton, and Downing was Charles Eliot. One of Eliot's most important contributions to park design was his insistence upon planning before developing a natural park for public use. His ideas included vegetation management and the preservation of vistas.<sup>49</sup> These early park planners set the standards for what the National Park Service began implementing and then passed down to state parks.

As has been noted, state park work was guided by the principles and practices that had been adopted and refined by National Park Service designers from 1918 to 1933, many of which evolved from naturalistic gardening, pleasure grounds, wilderness, and rustic architecture.<sup>50</sup> The major goal behind park planning was to maintain the attractiveness of the designated areas. This was accomplished through three potential steps: "by designing and arranging new structures; by removing unnecessary buildings; or eliminating unsightly conditions."<sup>51</sup>

Plans were required before CCC projects for the state parks could be approved. Master plans for state parks took various forms depending on the process already in place in the states and the involvement of National Park Service designers in the actual planning and design. Like national park plans, state park plans were to outline the "existing and ultimate desirable development of the area."<sup>52</sup>

According to Linda McClelland, the general landscape outline included "circulation, wilderness areas and developed areas. Circulation related to the road and trail system. Developed areas included: building group units, circulation system, public facilities, government building units, tourist facilities, and non-tourist units."<sup>53</sup> The park design also forced planners to consider the landscape in all kinds of weather, times of day, and seasons.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>49</sup>Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 36, 48–49.

<sup>50</sup> McClelland, *Presenting Nature*, 230.

<sup>51</sup> McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 145.

<sup>52</sup> McClelland, *Presenting Nature*, 231–232.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>54</sup> McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 444–445.

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Similar to those for national parks, the principles of landscape design for state parks were open-ended, fostered creative expression, and allowed for great variation and diversity based on each park's unique cultural and natural history. This is quite evident both within Mini-Wakan State Park itself and in the ways in which it differs from other local state parks and CCC projects. The buildings and structures at Mini-Wakan were incorporated far more stone than many of the other local park buildings, which are predominantly wood, with stone used as an accent.

Park design encouraged experimentation, innovation, refinement, and, above all, a steadfast search for "sensible, simple, and pragmatic solutions that followed function on the one hand and nature on the other."<sup>55</sup> This strategy, along with the guidelines for the CCC program, worked like a well-oiled machine, as many of the CCC workmen in the beginning did not have the knowledge base of landscape and park design. The principles set forth by the national and state park systems embraced this strategy.

Joyce McKay discusses the interrelationships of the buildings and structures to the landscape and overall park design and relates these parks' significance on a state level, although not necessarily their local significance.<sup>56</sup> Regardless of its inclusion, Mini-Wakan State Park has many of the resources that were evaluated and discussed in the Multiple Property Document, and therefore is significant as a statewide example of CCC park design. A few of the elements that McKay discusses in the Iowa state parks include roads, trails, landscape, picnic shelter, steps, and benches.

Following the example of the National Park Service, the state park systems suggested several basic ways in which buildings and structures could be made inconspicuous. These included screening, use of indigenous or frontier methods of construction, construction of buildings with low silhouettes and horizontal lines, avoidance of right angles and straight lines, and elimination of the lines of demarcation between nature and manmade structures.<sup>57</sup>

According to McClelland,

[s]tructures were to be located behind existing plant material or in a secluded nook in the terrain partly screened by some natural feature. If sufficient natural plant material didn't exist at the site otherwise best suited to the building's function, an adequate screen should be planted by repeating the same plant material that existed nearby. . . . It was best, to locate and adapt structures so that adding additional plants was unnecessary. A building with a low silhouette in which horizontal lines predominated was easier to screen. Finally, using indigenous or native

<sup>55</sup> McClelland, *Presenting Nature*, 236.

<sup>56</sup> McKay, Section F, 43.

<sup>57</sup> McClelland, *Presenting Nature*, 237.

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materials was the happiest means of blending the structure with its surroundings and was the characteristic that popularly defined "rustic architecture."<sup>58</sup>

### Park Design: Rustic Architecture

Planning in Iowa was to be sensitive to the rolling hills of prairie and woodland, which often resulted in low, horizontal massing of buildings, and buildings and structures of combined log and stone or frame construction.<sup>59</sup>

According to Joyce McKay,

rustic architecture guided the design of park buildings, structures, objects, and landscapes from 1916 through the CCC era in the 1930s to the early 1940s. Rustic architecture was a national level movement which provided guidelines for the construction of park facilities in national and state parks.<sup>60</sup>

Its emphasis was on landscaping and strong recognition of the need to conserve and remain sensitive to the natural environment.<sup>61</sup>

McKay tells us that

[r]ustic architecture made historical allusions through the use of the local pioneer building techniques and materials. The buildings and structures in each park were to represent or allude to a unified historical theme. . . . It also represented a reaction to the growing urbanism as did the establishment of parks themselves. Visitors escaped from the cities into nature and the past. . . . [T]he philosophy guiding the design of rustic architecture respected nature. Its construction was not to overly scar the landscape.<sup>62</sup>

According to McKay, the plan for parks should describe "building form, materials and the arrangement as well as the system of roads, trails, steps, benches and other landscaping features in relationship to the natural landscape."<sup>63</sup> In addition, a series of interrelated principles assisted in guiding the design of rustic architecture. The principles included "the demand for harmony of the built environment with the landscape; unity of historical theme; and the use of master planning."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> McClelland, *Presenting Nature*, 237.

<sup>59</sup> McKay, Section E, 25-26.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, Section E, 23.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, Section E, 27.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*



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These principles laid the foundation for numerous guidelines to be considered during park development. Principles of rustic architecture also specified that "the impact of construction was minimized by hand labor and heavy equipment was avoided."<sup>65</sup>

After 1935, other architectural styles were used in parks. McKay points out that

[b]y 1940, rustic architecture had become outdated. It was viewed as an affectation, as a fictitious rendering of pioneer architecture and therefore dishonest. A design which required a high level of professional input and large amounts of both skilled and unskilled intensive labor could not be achieved under the intensive state and national park expansion after 1935. As other design philosophies were emerging in the early 1940s, park development came to a rapid halt with American involvement in World War II.<sup>66</sup>

### Summary

The success of Mini-Wakan State Park is largely due to its association with the CCC Program. It fulfills National Register Criterion C as a state-significant, relatively unaltered example of work of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). It also meets the criterion as a piece of architecture designed by Amos Barton Emery, a well-known Iowa architect who worked on Depression-era projects. It is also a good example of a CCC-designed park landscape of the Depression era. The park's period of significance is from 1933 to c. 1936. The park serves as an example of rustic park architecture, designed park landscape, and advancements in engineering.

The integrity of the Depression-era CCC design of Mini-Wakan State Park has been maintained at a high level. The majority of the stone structures and building has been treated with care and continue to have a strong impact on the park, unlike new park structures. There is no doubt that Amos Barton Emery and the 165 young CCC workers of Camp 778 would recognize their project and be pleased that the park, its structures, and buildings have been maintained to such a degree, in a relatively unaltered condition.

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<sup>65</sup> McKay., Section E, 27-28.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., Section E, 29.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 24

Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa

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\_\_\_\_\_. "North Shore Road Appears Likely." March 30, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. "North Shore Road is Now Assured." April 6, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Great Lakes May Get State Park." May 18, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. "New North Shore Road Contract Let On Tuesday." May 25, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. "North Shore Road Work is Advancing Rapidly." July 20, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. "S. L. Prot. Assn. Annual Meeting." August 24, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. "New North Shore Road Completed Last Week." August 31, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Boys Civilian Camp at Milford." October 12, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. "General Improvement of Lakes Planned by C.C.C." October 26, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Conservation Camp Boys to Advance 25 Year Program of Conservation Board." November 2, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Routine of Civilian Conservation Camp Described by E.W. Thorson, Civil Engineer." November 16, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. "C.C.C. Camp Supt. Gets Appointment." November 30, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. "A Close-up Story of the Civilians Conservation Corps Camp at Milford." November 30, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Lake Region to Receive Direct Benefit from Conservation Corps." December 28, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Milford Provides Work Shop for C.C.C. Camp." January 11, 1934.

\_\_\_\_\_. "CCC To Develope [sic] The Lake Regions." February 1, 1934.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Shelter House for Several New State Parks." February 8, 1934.

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\_\_\_\_\_. "Rustic Foot Bridge to Span Site of Rock Dam at Inlet to Spirit Lake." February 15, 1934.

\_\_\_\_\_. "M. Smith of Okoboji Transferred to Cresco." April 19, 1934.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Special Educator for Conservation Camp." March 1, 1934.

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 25

Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa

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- \_\_\_\_\_. "CCC Camp to Remain at Milford." March 29, 1934.  
\_\_\_\_\_. "Many Trees Planted by Okoboji Camp Boys." May 31, 1934.  
\_\_\_\_\_. "Four New Parks Available for Public in Dickinson Co. This Season." June 7, 1934.  
\_\_\_\_\_. "CCC Camp Boys to Make Many Improvements." June 21, 1934.  
\_\_\_\_\_. "Gull Point Shelter House Being Built." August 16, 1934.  
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Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Name of Property

Dickinson County, Iowa  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 12.5

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

|   |      |         |          |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| 1 | 15   | 329799  | 4818564  |
|   | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| 2 | 15   | 330545  | 4818556  |

|   |      |         |          |
|---|------|---------|----------|
| 3 | 15   | 330896  | 4818184  |
|   | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| 4 | 15   | 329783  | 4818236  |

### 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 Sheriffa M. Jones, Architectural Historian *sjones@iowalakesrcd.org*

organization Rural Preservation Partners date March 14, 2009

street & number 203 10<sup>th</sup> Street SW PO BOX 265 telephone (712) 262-2083

city or town Spencer state Iowa zip code 51301

## 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 Gull Point State Park, Dave Stoeber / Angela Corio, Landscape Architect

street & number 1500 Harpen Street/ 502 E 9<sup>th</sup> Street telephone (712) 337-3211 / (515) 281-4579

city or town Milford / Des Moines state Iowa zip code 51351 / 50319-0034

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

Section number 10 Page 26

Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa

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### GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

#### Verbal Boundary Description

The Mini-Wakan State Park is north of the city of Spirit Lake, Iowa, in Dickinson County. It is bounded by Iowa/Minnesota Highway 2 to the north, Minnewaukon Street to the east, and Big Spirit Lake (Spawning Area) on the south and west.

#### Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the property conform to the historic boundaries associated with this property.

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Page 27

Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa

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### PHOTOGRAPHS

Sheriffa Jones was the photographer for the black-and-white (May and October 2008) photos. All negatives for the black-and-white photos are held at the Iowa Lakes RC&D office, 203 Tenth Street SW, Spencer, Iowa 51301.

#### **Black & White Print Photos (see photo sketch map on following page)**

- #1 Looking south to the park entrance and stone entrance pillars from Highway 2.
- #2 Looking west to the picnic shelter east and north façades.
- #3 Looking east to the west and south façades of the picnic shelter.
- #4 Looking northeast to the south façade of the picnic shelter.
- #5 Looking north to the south and east façades of the picnic shelter.
- #6 Looking west to the east façade of the picnic shelter.
- #7 Interior of the north part of the T-shaped picnic shelter and through to the breezeway. Notice that these walls have a split-faced boulder.
- #8 Looking into the south part of the T-shaped picnic shelter in the direction of the fireplace. Camera pointed southwest. Notice these walls are boulder faced.
- #9 Looking southwest from the east of the picnic shelter. This stone bench on the south side of the stone steps faces Big Spirit Lake. An identical stone bench is on the north side of the stone steps.
- #10 These stone steps lead from the east side of the picnic shelter to Big Spirit Lake. They are flanked by a stone bench on each side.
- #11 Looking to the south from Highway 2. Nonextant bridge location.
- #12 Looking to the south from Highway 2. The entrance road and two of the four stone pillars and suspended sign.
- #13 Looking southwest. Entrance pillar one of four labeled #1 on map 5.
- #14 Looking southeast. Entrance pillar two of four labeled #1 on map 5.
- #15 Looking southwest. Entrance pillar three of four labeled #1 on map 5.
- #16 Looking southeast. Entrance pillar four of four labeled #1 on map 5.
- #17 Looking south. The entrance road and landscape.
- #18 Looking southeast. The picnic shelter.
- #19 Looking east. The stone paved surface on the north side of picnic shelter.
- #20 Looking east. The stone paved surface on the south side of picnic shelter.
- #21 Looking west/northwest. The two stone benches and stone steps, labeled #5 & #6 on map 5.
- #22 Looking west. Stone bench labeled #6 on map 5.
- #23 Looking east. Stone bench labeled #6 on map 5.

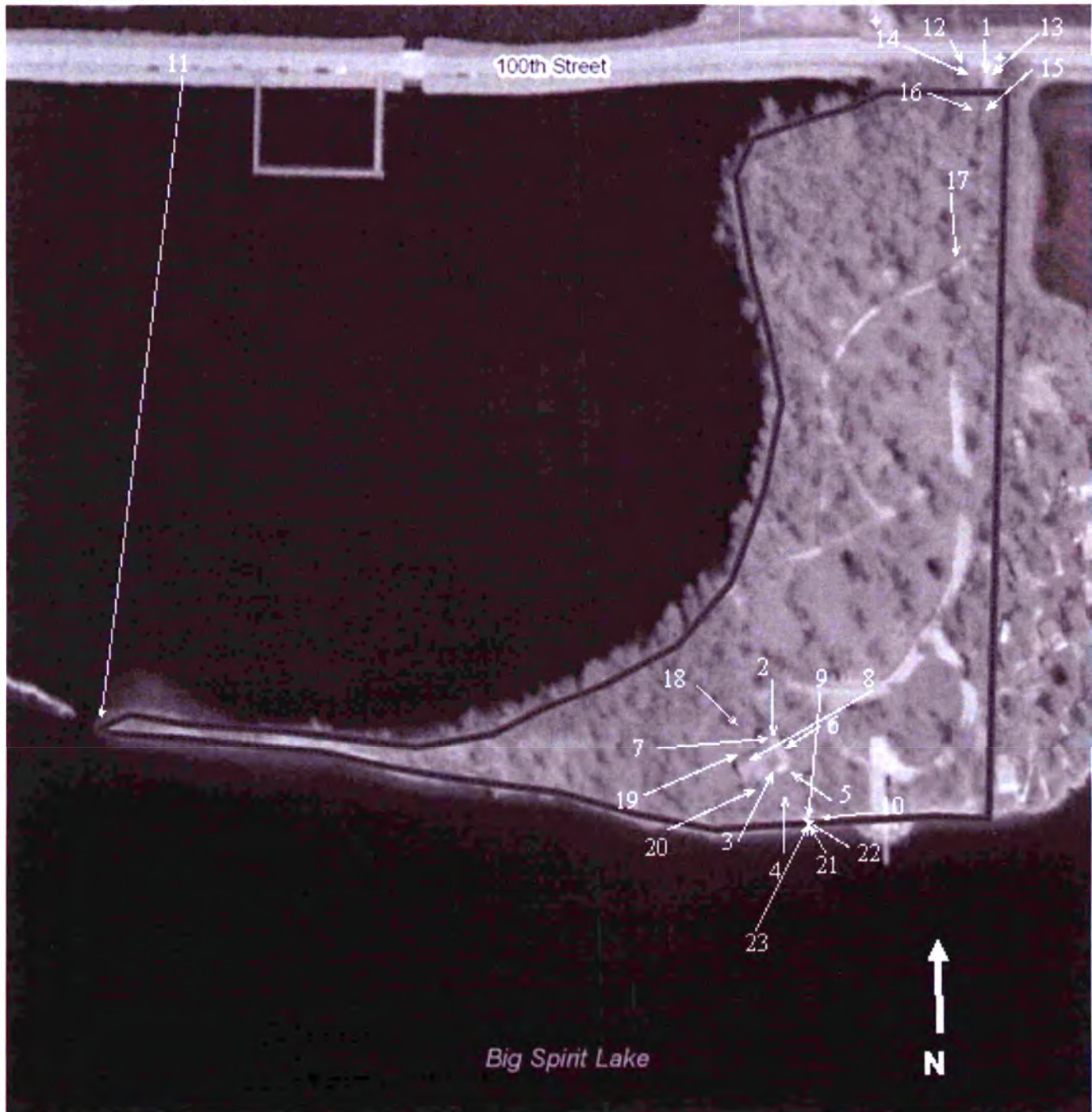
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Page 28

Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa

## PHOTO SKETCH MAP





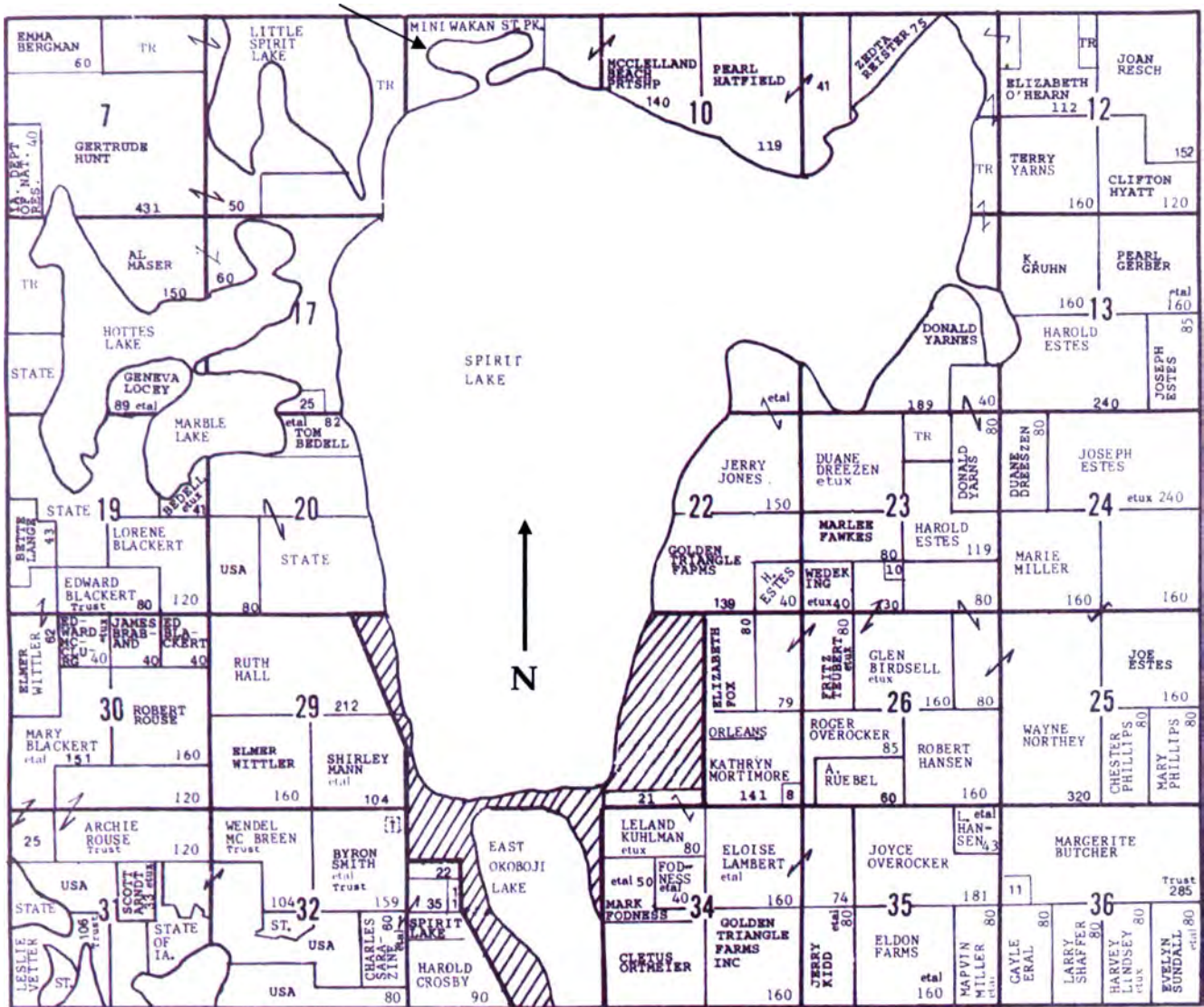
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Page 29

Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa

## MAPS



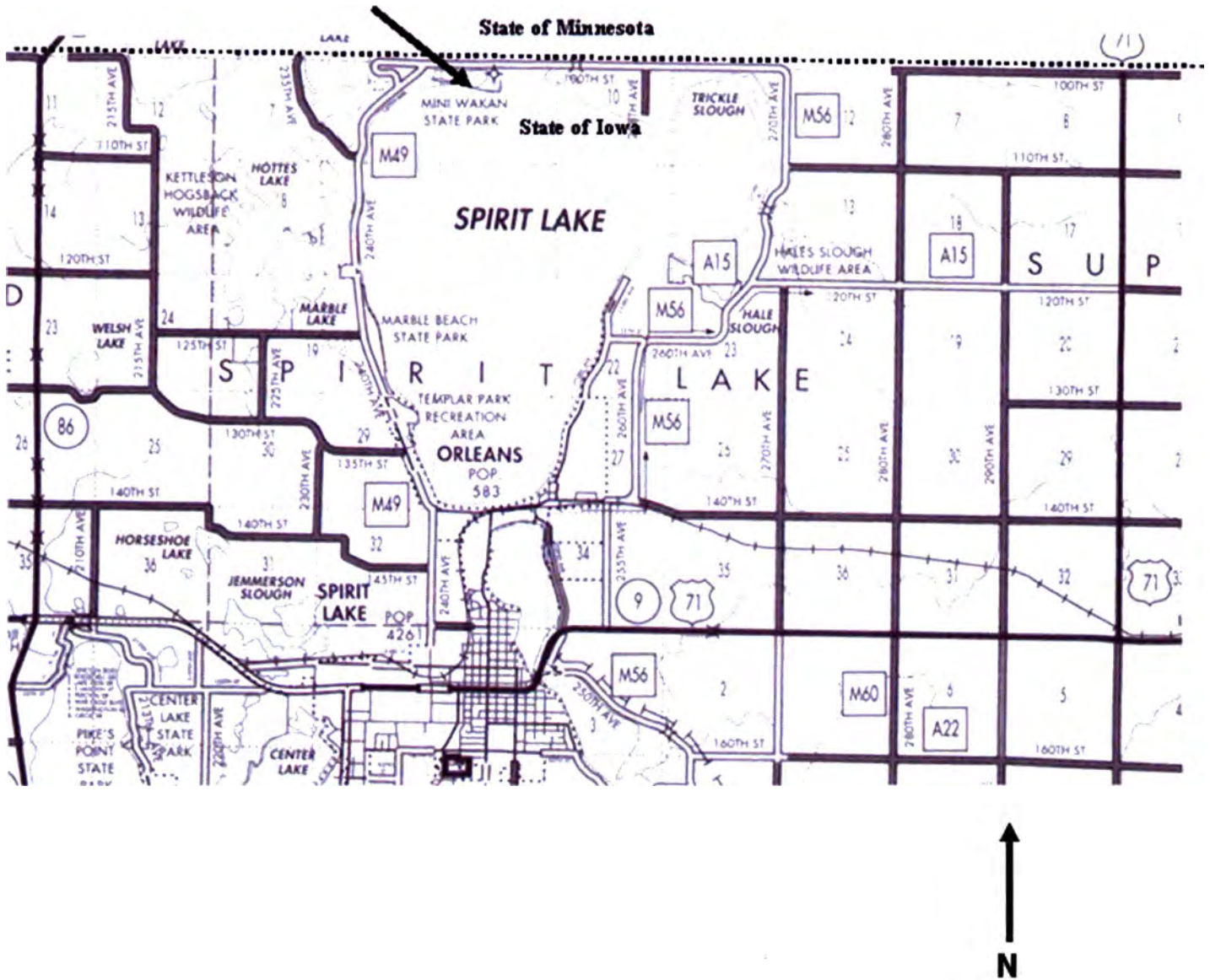
**MAP 1:** Plat Map of Dickinson County, Iowa Farm & Home Plat & Directory, 1998. Spirit Lake, Iowa, Dickinson County. Mini-Wakan State Park at the far north end of Big Spirit Lake, location noted with an arrow.

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Page 30

Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa



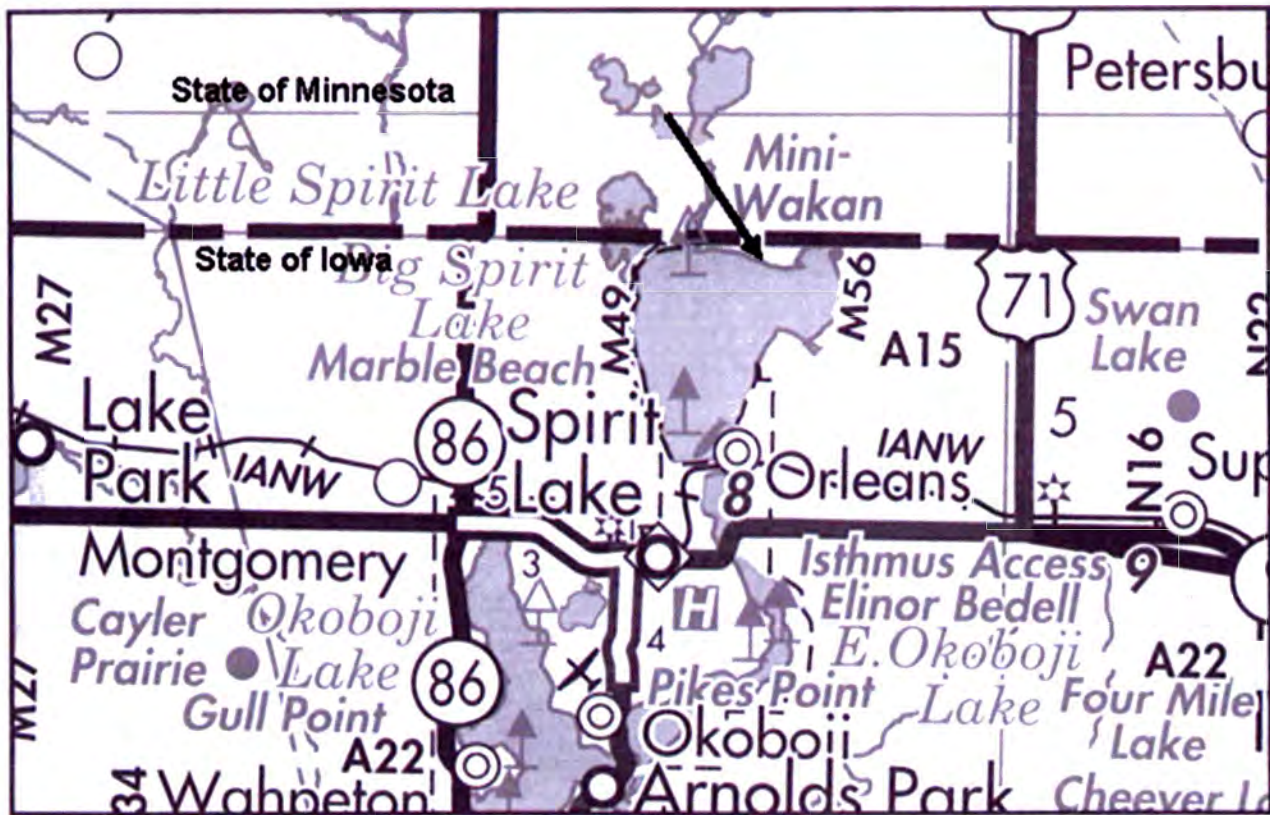
MAP 2: Iowa Department of Transportation, 2008. www.iowadotmaps.com (accessed October 16, 2009) Spirit Lake, Iowa. Location of Mini-Wakan State Park noted with an arrow. Map not to scale.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Page 31

Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa



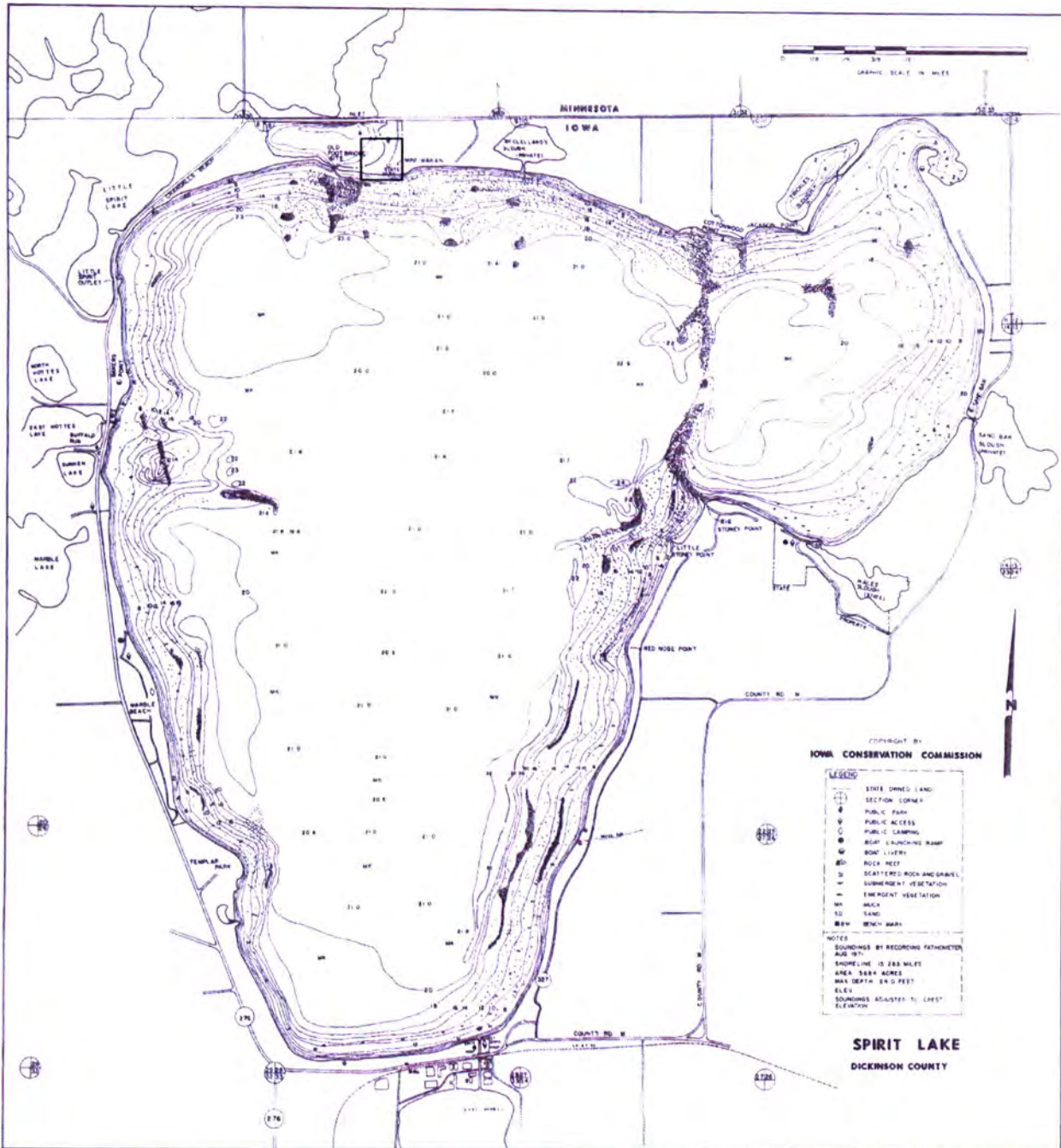
MAP 3: Iowa Department of Transportation, 2008. [www.iowadotmaps.com](http://www.iowadotmaps.com) (accessed October 16, 2009). Spirit Lake, Iowa. Location of Mini-Wakan State Park noted with an arrow. Map not to scale.

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa



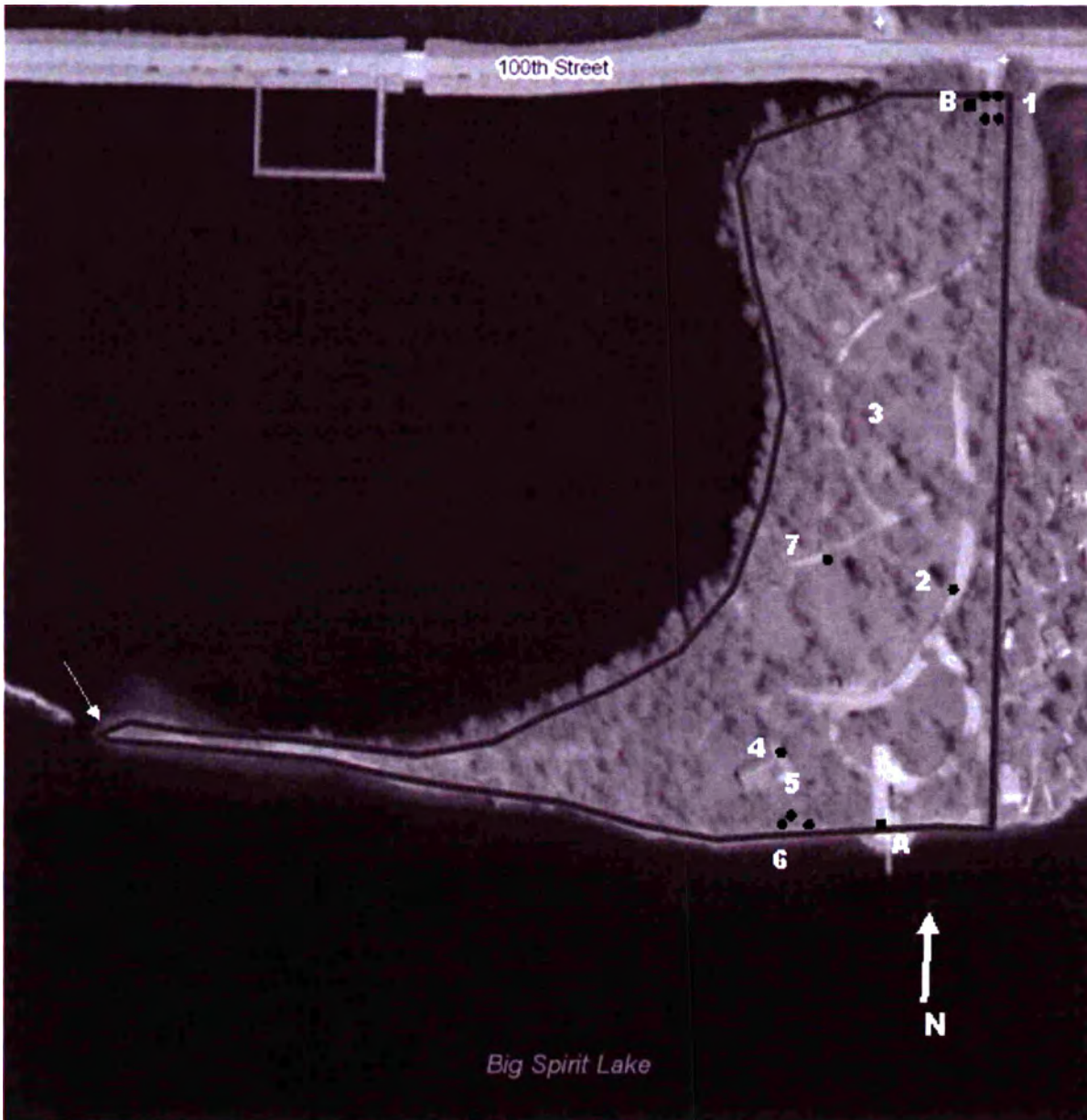
MAP 4: Courtesy of the Iowa Conservation Commission, c. 1971. Mini-Wakan State Park is within the boundaries of the box.

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Page 33

Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa



**MAP 5:** Map of Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District boundaries, 12.5 acres. Courtesy of Dickinson County, October 17, 2008. 2002 Color Infrared Aerial Photo showing park boundaries as well as resources within the district. Contributing resources are denoted with a dot next to the resource and number; noncontributing resources are denoted with a letter and a square next to the resource; nonextant bridge is marked with an arrow (see next page).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Page 34

Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa

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|   | <b>Contributing Resources</b> | <b>Type</b> |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Entrance Pillars              | Structure   |
| 2 | Roadway                       | Structure   |
| 3 | Landscape                     | Site        |
| 4 | Picnic Shelter                | Building    |
| 5 | Steps                         | Structure   |
| 6 | Benches                       | Structure   |
| 7 | Trails                        | Structure   |

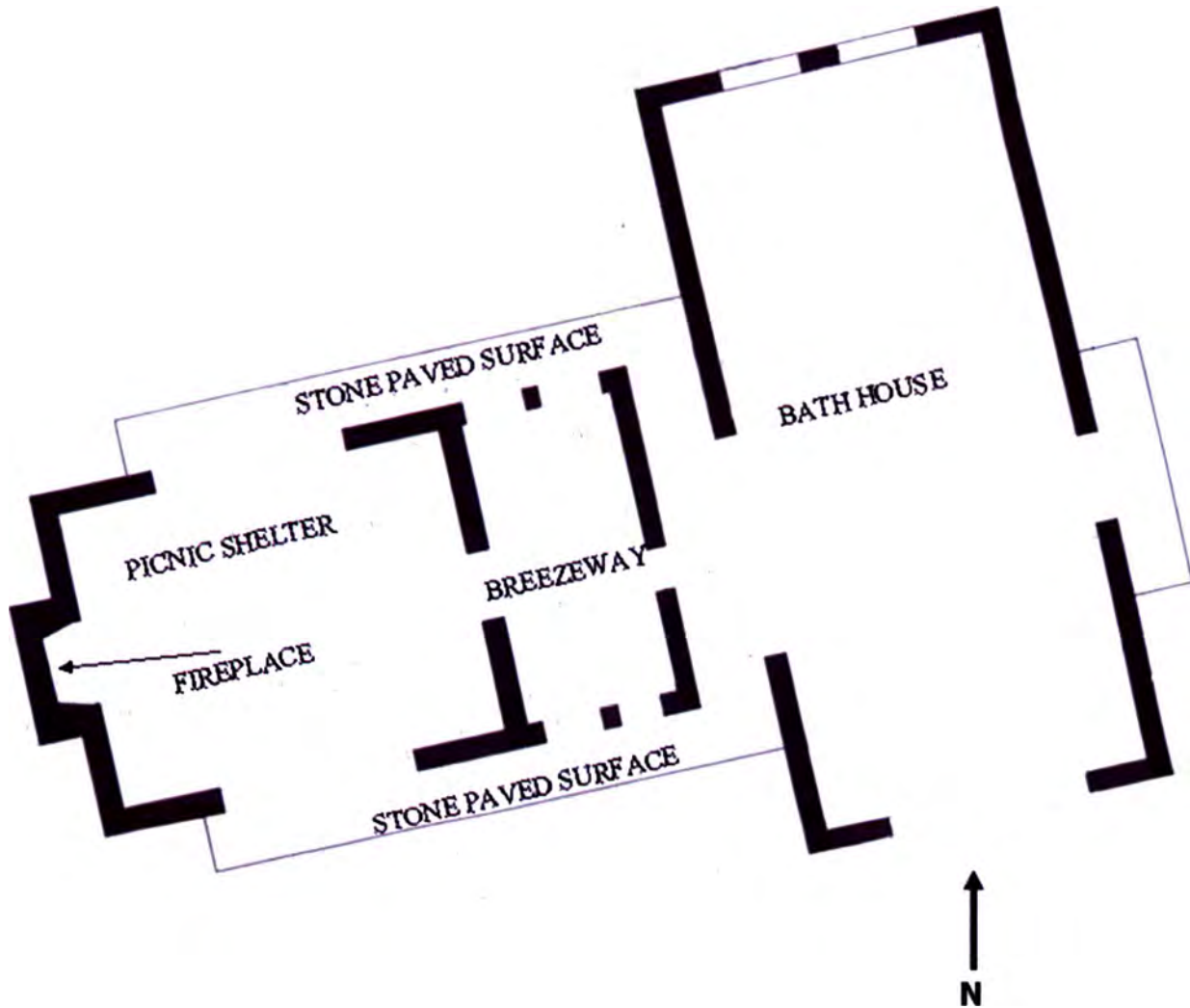
|   | <b>Noncontributing Resources</b> | <b>Type</b> |
|---|----------------------------------|-------------|
| A | Boat Dock                        | Structure   |
| B | Two-post suspended sign          | Structure   |

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa



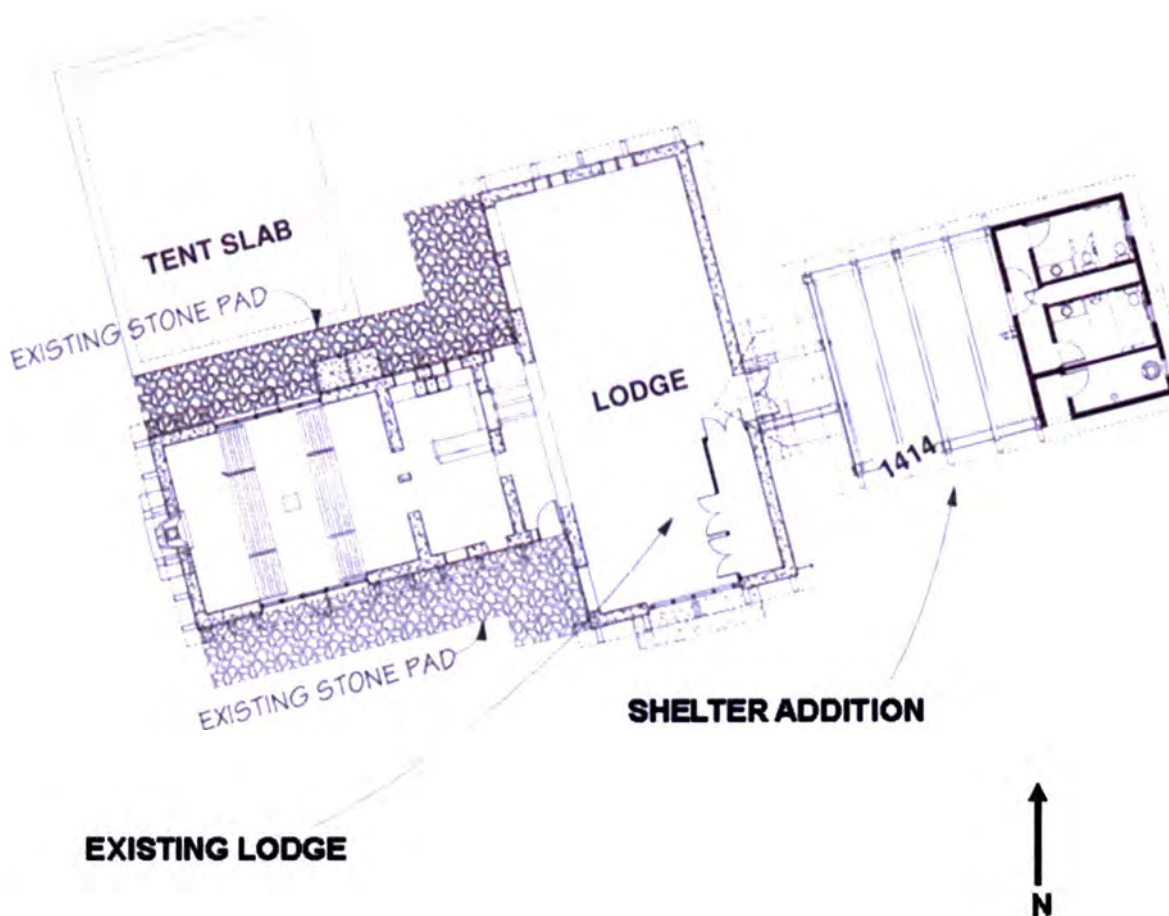
**FLOOR PLAN:** Mini-Wakan State Park Picnic Shelter, spatial uses upon completion. As-built stone walls depicted with solid black; stone-paved surfaces depicted with thin line on the north and south sides, not to scale. From Department of the Interior National Park Service and Iowa Conservation Commission, August 21, 1935.

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National Park Service

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Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa



**PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN:** Mini-Wakan State Park Picnic Shelter. From the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (Thierry Amice, Engineer/ Architect) with review from the State Historic Preservation Office, 2009. The two additions are the tent slab and shelter addition. The shelter addition will include a covered picnic area, year-round restroom, and seasonal ADA restrooms.



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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa

## PHOTOS



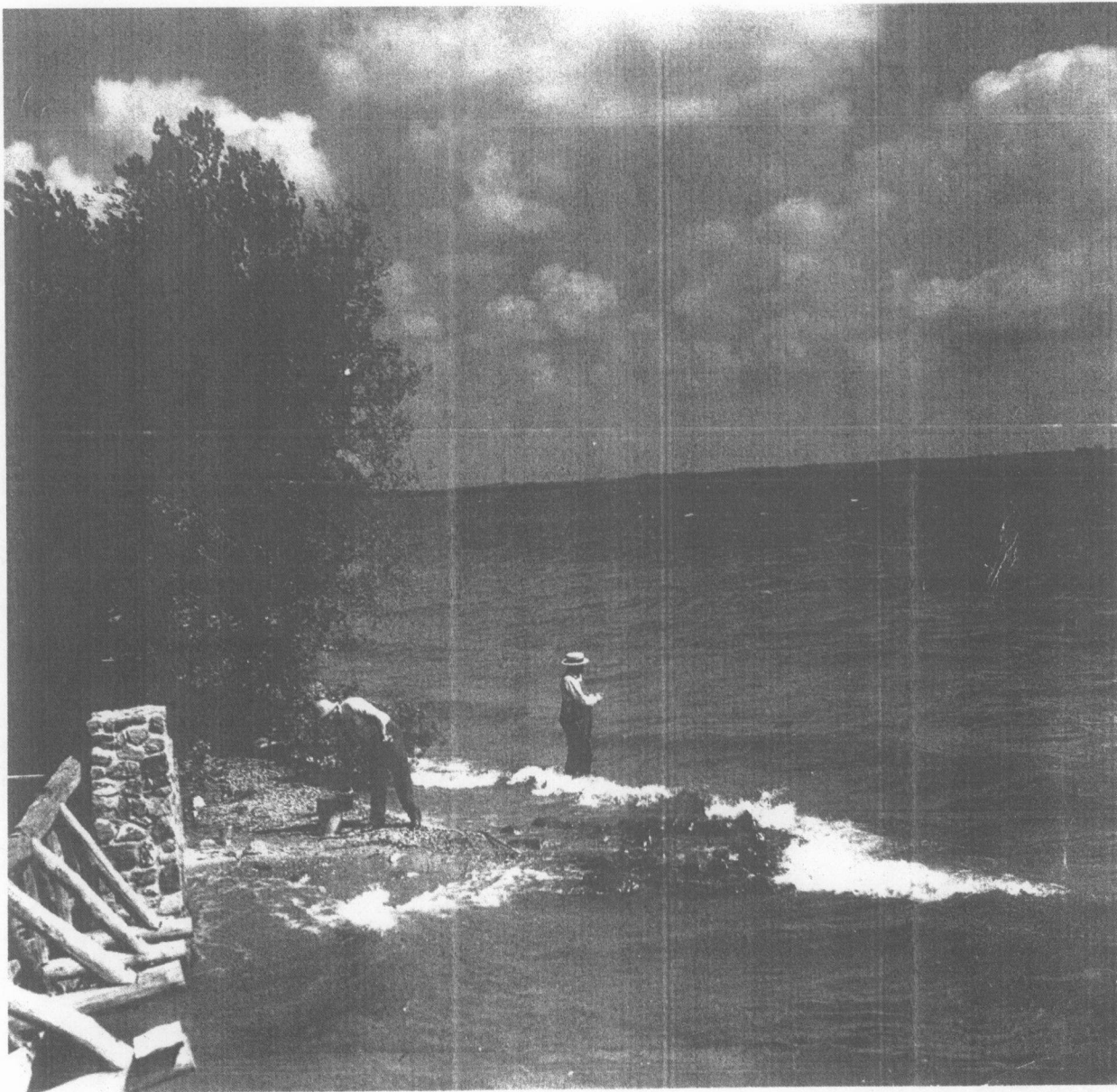
The Mini-Wakan Picnic Shelter upon completion, looking north, c. 1937. (Photo courtesy of Natalie Hinn, President of the Spirit Lake Protective Association.)

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa



Nonextant bridge at Mini-Wakan State Park is visible to the left of the photo, c. 1935. The bridge was constructed to the west of the picnic shelter. (Photo courtesy of Natalie Hinn, President of the Spirit Lake Protective Association.)

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Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Dickinson County, Iowa



Nonextant bridge at Mini-Wakan State Park, c. 1935. The bridge was constructed to the west of the picnic shelter. (Photo courtesy of Juliana Mayne, Mini-Wakan Committee.)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
NAME:

MULTIPLE CCC Properties in Iowa State Parks MPS  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: IOWA, Dickinson

DATE RECEIVED: 1/08/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/27/10  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 2/11/10 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 2/22/10  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10000021

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: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 2-17-10 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ 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.



#1

mini-wakan State Park District  
Spirit Lake, Iowa



#2

Mini-wakan State Park

Spirit Lake, Iowa





#3

Mini-Wakan State Park

Spirit Lake, Iowa



#4

Mini-wakan State Park  
Spirit Lake, Iowa



#5

Mini-Wakan State Park

Spirit Lake, Iowa



#16

Mini-wakan State Park  
Spirit Lake, Iowa





#7

Mini-wakan State Park  
Spirit Lake, Iowa



#8

Mini-wakan State Park  
Spirit Lake, Iowa



#19

Mini-Wakan State Park  
Spirit Lake, Iowa



#10

Mini-wakan State Park

Spirit Lake, Iowa





Mini Wakan State Park Historic  
District

Spirit Lake, IA

#11



Missi Wakan State Park Historic District

Spirit Lake, Iowa

#12



Mini Wakan State Park Historic  
District

Spirit Lake, Iowa

#13



Mini-wakan State Park Historic  
District

Spirit Lake, Iowa

#14





Mini-wakan State Park Historic  
Spirit Lake, Iowa District

#15



Mini-Wakan State Park Historic  
District

Spirit Lake, Iowa

#16



Mini-Wakan State Park  
Historic District

Spirit Lake, Iowa

#17



Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Spirit Lake, Iowa

#18





Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District  
Spirit Lake, Iowa

#19



Mini-wakan State Park Historic District

Spirit Lake, Iowa

#20



Mini-wakan State Park Historic District  
Spirit Lake, Iowa

#21

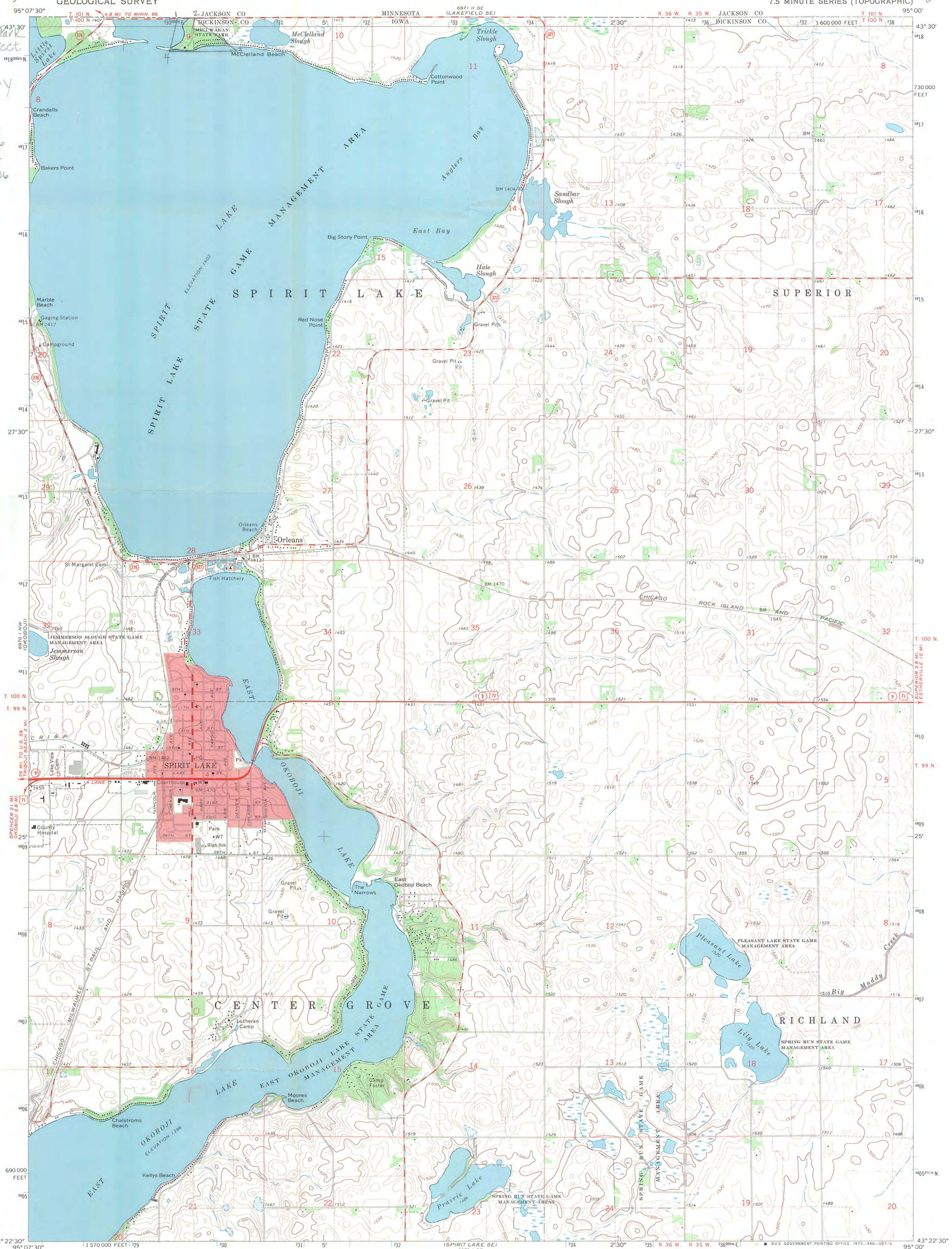


Mini-wakan State Park Historic District  
Spirit Lake, Iowa

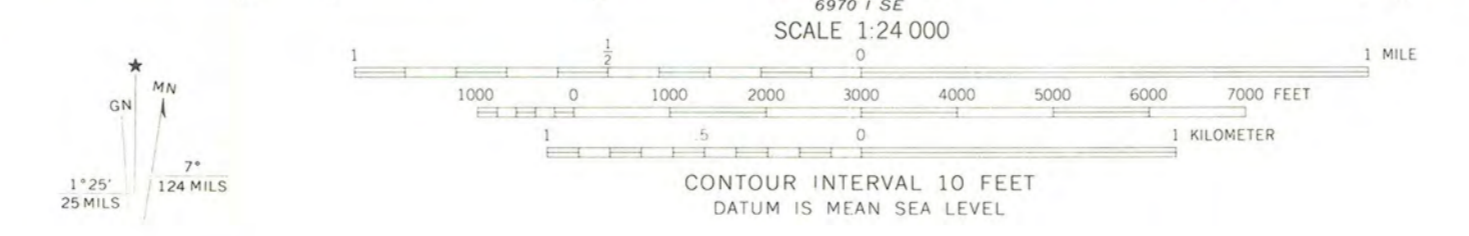
#22



Mini-wakan State Park  
24490 100th Street  
Spirit Lake  
Dickinson County  
Iowa  
UTM  
1. 15/329799/4818564  
2. 15/330545/4818536  
3. 15/330896/4818184  
4. 15/329783/4818236



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and USC&GS  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial  
photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1970  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Iowa coordinate system, north zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 15, shown in blue  
Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown  
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where  
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
Primary highway, all weather, hard surface  
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface  
Light duty road, all weather, improved surface  
Unimproved road, fair or dry weather  
U. S. Route  
State Route

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242  
AND BY THE IOWA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

SPIRIT LAKE, IOWA  
N4322.5—W9500/7.5  
1970  
AMS 6970 1 NE—SERIES V876

December 21, 2009

Carol Shull, Chief  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye Street, N.W.-- 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, D.C. 20005



Dear Ms. Shull:

The following National Register nomination(s) are enclosed for your review and listed if acceptable.

- Mini-Wakan State Park Historic District, 24490 – 100<sup>th</sup> Street, Spirit Lake vicinity, Dickinson County, Iowa

Sincerely,

*Elizabeth Foster Hill*

Elizabeth Foster Hill  
Tax Incentive Programs Manager/  
National Register Coordinator