

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



274

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Lake Preston Tourist Park Historic District
other names/site number Lake Preston City Park; Thorsnes Park

2. Location

street & number Southeast corner of the intersection of US Highway 14 and South Park Avenue not for publication N/A
city or town Lake Preston Vicinity N/A
state South Dakota Code SD county Kingsbury code 077 zip code 57249

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jay D. Vogt
Signature of certifying official

04-18-2002
Date

SD SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

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 of the Keeper: Edson A. Beall Date of Action: 5/30/02

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u> </u>	Buildings
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	Sites
<u>15</u>	<u>17</u>	Structures
<u>21</u>	<u>18</u>	Objects
		Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE	Sub: Outdoor recreation Sports facility
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE	Sub: Outdoor recreation Sports facility
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

No style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation	CONCRETE
Roof	WOOD: Shingle
	METAL: Tin
	ASPHALT
Walls	WOOD: Weatherboard
	CONCRETE
	METAL: Tin
	STUCCO
Other	_____

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

See Continuation Sheets

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.)

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1922-1951

Significant Dates 1922
 1926
 1933
 1936

Significant Person N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder N/A

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

See Continuation Sheets

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- Preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- Designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository: N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 13.5 Acres

UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>14</u>	<u>629890</u>	<u>4913040</u>	3	<u>14</u>	<u>630160</u>	<u>4912920</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>14</u>	<u>630160</u>	<u>4913050</u>	4	<u>14</u>	<u>630100</u>	<u>4912920</u>

See continuation sheet

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jill Gray
organization _____ date November 2001
street & number 823 E. Iowa telephone (605) 343-2561
city or town Rapid City state SD zip code 57701

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)

Lake Preston Tourist Park Historic District
Name of Property

Kingsbury County, South Dakota
County and State

Property Owner

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

name City of Lake Preston
street & number 111 3rd Street Southeast telephone (605) 847-4402
city or town Lake Preston state SD zip code 57249

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page # 1

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION:

The Lake Preston Tourist Park, or Thorsnes Park as it is now named, is located at the southeast corner of the intersection of US Highway 14 and South Park Avenue, near the eastern edge of the town of Lake Preston. The park is roughly rectangular in plan with vegetation including grass and loosely spaced trees, including ash, birch, spruce, pine and juniper. The park contains numerous objects and structures constructed between 1922 and 1985, including a swimming pool and bathhouse, a band stand, several picnic shelters, a fountain, monument, restroom/refreshment stand, tennis courts, a baseball diamond, sand volleyball court, two Quonset huts, and numerous pieces of various playground equipment. The park is surrounded by a neighborhood on the south and west, by the highway and commercial buildings on the north, and by an open field on the east.

The Tourist Park is accessed by a circular drive on the west side of the park, located off Park Avenue, which is flanked by entrance piers on the northern entrance and a sign which arches over the entrance on the south. The majority of the park facilities are located directly to the east of the drive and are accessible by foot. The swimming pool, bathhouse, tennis courts, and baseball diamond are all located on the northern edge of the park. In the interior section of the park are the band stand, fountain, restroom/refreshment stand, picnic shelter, and the various playground equipment and games, such as the horseshoe pits, shuffleboard, and checkerboard. The southern section of the park contains a camping area on the west, with six camper and trailer spots with electrical hookups, tables and barbeque grills. To the east of the camping area are Quonset huts, and farther to the east is a very large grassy area with a picnic shelter, numerous barbeque grills, a sand volleyball court, and three rows of trees which delineate the southern boundary of the park. The camping area and a road which circles around the Quonset huts are accessed through the southern arched entrance.

Contributing Resources:

1. **Restroom/Refreshment Stand – 1922** The Restroom/Refreshment Stand was built at the same time as the first children's swimming pool. It is a rectangular building constructed of cement block with a shallow hipped roof of asphalt shingles, with wide overhanging eaves. On the north elevation there is a rectangular window area for the refreshment stand with a pedestrian door hung horizontally for the covering. On the east elevation there is a door on the north end into the refreshment area and a door on the south into the men's restroom. The west elevation has a door on the south into the women's restroom.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page # 2

2. **Tennis Courts** – 1922 There are two tennis courts surrounded by a tall chain link fence. Although the playing surface has been recovered over the years, the location and layout of the courts is original.
3. **Baseball Diamond** – 1922 The baseball diamond has two dugouts with wooden benches. One bench has been replaced recently. The diamond is surrounded by an historic wire fence and a back stop on the northwest. Outside of the fence are four new metal spectator bleachers. Although the facilities have been upgraded over the years, the location and layout of the baseball diamond are original.
4. **Bathhouse** – 1926 The Bathhouse is a long, rectangular building measuring 18 x 84 feet, with wood weatherboard siding and a side gable roof with wide overhanging eaves, covered with asphalt shingles. On the north façade is a set of double wooden doors in the middle of the elevation, and a row of three-sectioned windows that run along the length of the structure near the roof line. On the south elevation, the building is divided into three sections, with the middle section extended out from the building a few feet, and the roof line raised slightly. The middle section has a rolling, overhead door, and the two side sections have a pedestrian door. All three sections have a row of three-sectioned windows along the roof line.
5. **Fountain** – 1929 The Fountain is a three-tiered structure constructed of small cobblestones. There are three circular sections of shallow concrete basins stacked upon one another. The fountain sits on a raised base of loose gravel surrounded by a perimeter of larger cobblestones. Encircling the fountain is a flower bed.
6. **Concrete Light Pole** – 1931 The light pole is constructed of concrete and is approximately 12 feet in height. The pole has a six-sided base approximately three feet high, atop which sits a smaller six-sided pillar which tapers near the top. On top of the pillar is an ornate cast iron lamp with an enameled cover.
7. **Entrance Pillars** – 1933 The Entrance Pillars, located near the corner of the intersection of US Highway 14 and South Park Avenue, flank the northern entrance into the park's circular drive. The pillars, which are constructed of granite cobblestones, sit on concrete bases with sloping sides. Atop the concrete base is a section of cobblestones which creates a foundation for the pillar. The pillar tapers in slightly from the base and has rectangular insets on all four sides. The insets are of small cobbles of various rock types. Above the area with the insets is a wide band of various cobblestones, approximately 8 inches from the top of the pillar, that extends out from the pillar the same distance as the cobblestone base. Atop the pillar is a glass and black metal light fixture.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page # 3

8. **Band Stand – 1933** The band stand is an octagon shaped structure with a poured concrete floor, and stucco half walls. Circling the outside of the walls is a projecting band, approximately 4 inches wide, extending out from the walls at the same level as the floor inside the structure. Extending above the walls at each wall junction are five sided pillars which support the roof. The roof, which is covered with wood shingles, is octagon shaped like the band stand, and begins along the edges at a shallow pitch, but meets in the middle and rises sharply. Atop the roof is a spire topped with a metal ball. The ceiling is covered with narrow wood bead board. On the east side of the structure are poured concrete stairs with new metal hand rails painted black.
9. **Monument – 1936** Located to the southeast of the entrance pillars is a monument erected to honor those who guided the development of the park. The monument is a two sided object with three tiered sections atop a square base of concrete. The three tiers are constructed of small granite cobbles, with the two bottom sections being horizontal rectangles, and the top section a vertical rectangle with a rounded top covered with a thin layer of concrete. There are four inset, concrete panels on each side of the monument; two panels on the top section, and one each on the middle and bottom sections. On the side of the monument that faces west, the panels are inscribed as follows, from top to bottom: "Purchased Park Site June 15-1922 / J.H. Lloyd, Mayor, J.W. Lawler, O.D. Thorsnes, T.P. Golberg, I.R. Kidder, A.B. Maxam, W.M. Look / C.W. Lance-City Eng. 1911-1928 / Donated 1936 by W.E. Peterman". On the east facing side of the monument the panels are inscribed from top to bottom: "1926-1936 Ten Years Useful Service, Swimming Pool Committee / P.R. Phinney, Jos. Funk, O.D. Thorsnes, H.A. Keith, J.W. Lawler / Dollie Peterman, Matron 1926-1936 / Band Stand Erected 1933".
10. **Entrance Arch – 1936** The Entrance Arch spans the southern entrance to the park. On either side of the entrance are rough coursed pressed concrete block piers which support a wooden plywood arch. The top of the wooden arch is actually a gable shape instead of curved. The side piers rise six courses, then taper into a smaller diameter, and rise another eight courses. The piers and arch are painted white, with the words "Lake Preston City Park" painted in blue.
11. **Picnic Shelter – 1936** The Picnic Shelter is constructed of four, pressed concrete block columns supporting a hip roof with wide overhanging eaves that flare slightly. The roof is covered with pressed tin shingles. The four columns, one in each corner, rise for five courses, then taper in, and rise another six courses. They are painted white with a band of red on the course that tapers in. The floor is made of concrete. The ceiling is made of narrow wooden bead board with the interior section of the ceiling recessed. In the center of the shelter is a concrete fire pit with a column rising from the center and extending above the roofline. The top

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page # 4

of the fire pit has been covered by a wooden counter that has been constructed around the central column.

12. **Metal Lamp Posts** – 1936 There are four iron lamp posts that flank the horseshoe pits, two on each side. The posts are molded cast iron with a circular base supporting fluted round columns, topped with lamps with scalloped covers that have been painted black.
13. **Checkerboard** – 1936 The outdoor checkerboard is a concrete pad, built into the ground, and measures 10' x 10' in size. The red and black squares have been painted onto the concrete.
14. **Horseshoe Pits** – 1936 There are three sets of horseshoe pits in a row, with the two "sides" approximately 35 feet apart.
15. **Shuffle Board** – 1939 There are four Shuffleboard courts, constructed of concrete, that are all in a row parallel to each other. The shuffleboard markings have been painted onto the concrete.
16. **Quonset Huts** – 1950 There are two Quonset Huts located in the southwestern corner of the park. Both Quonsets are made of gray, corrugated sheet metal. They have large metal sliding doors in the south end which have been painted red, and vents near the peak of the roof at both the north and south ends. The eastern Quonset also has a fiberglass roll-up overhead door in the north end.

Non-Contributing Resources:

17. **Cannon** – 1918 The Cannon, which is located near the western edge of the park, is a large field artillery cannon with wheels. The cannon sits on a concrete pad. The plaque which is attached to the cannon says, "60 P^R B.L. Carr. Field. / BOC 1918 / W^I Carriage 51¼ CWTS. / Reg. No. C 85496. Although the cannon dates to 1918, it was placed in the park at an unknown date, and is therefore non-contributing.
18. **Picnic Shelter** – 1968 The Picnic Shelter is located in the large grassy area in the southern section of the park. The picnic shelter is constructed of a concrete pad, with six metal posts supporting a metal gabled roof. The picnic shelter is non-contributing due to lack of age.
19. **Time Capsule** – 1979 The Time Capsule is a rectangular piece of polished granite atop a concrete base. A plaque on the capsule reads "LAKE PRESTON CENTENNIAL / 1879 JUNE

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page # 5

22-24 1979 / TIME CAPSULE TO BE OPENED IN THE SUMMER OF 2079 / DEDICATED TO FUTURE CITIZENS OF THIS COMMUNITY". It is non-contributing due to lack of age.

20. **Swimming Pool** – C. 1985 The swimming pool, which is the third pool in the park, is rectangular and has a metal lining. The length of the pool is orientated north to south. There are two diving boards on the south end of the pool and lifeguard stations on both the east and west. The bathhouse is to the north, and there is an equipment and chemical storage building in the northwest corner. The pool is surrounded by a tall chain link fence with rows of barbed wire at the top. The swimming pool is non-contributing due to lack of age.
21. **Kiddy Pool** – C. 1985 The kiddy pool is located just to the east of the large swimming pool. It is a small, oval shaped pool. It is non-contributing due to lack of age.
22. **Wooden Sign** – 1989 Located in the northwestern corner of the park, near the entrance piers, the wooden sign is rectangular and supported by two wooden posts that raise it from the ground. The sign itself is constructed of horizontal wooden boards that have been attached to each other. On the sign are raised letters which say "Welcome To Thorsnes Park, Lake Preston, SD". The sign is surrounded by a circular flowerbed. The sign is non-contributing due to lack of age.
23. **Various Playground Equipment** – Unknown Date Located throughout the park are numerous pieces of modern playground equipment. Included are two merry-go-rounds, two slides, two climbing structures, teeter-totters, two swing sets, and a wooden climbing structure with swings and a slide. The two swing sets were installed in the park in 1953, but it is unknown when the other equipment was installed. However, from photographs in old newspapers, it would appear that the current equipment, with the exception of the 1953 swing sets, was installed after the mid-1960s. The playground equipment is non-contributing due to lack of age.
24. **Bleachers** – Unknown date Located on the western side of the swimming pool, just outside the fence, is a set of covered wooden bleachers, which have been painted red. There is mention of seats for spectators at the swimming pool when the original pool was constructed in 1926. However, it is doubtful that the current wooden bleachers could date from that time period. Since the date of the bleachers being installed in the park is unknown, they are a non-contributing resource.
25. **Drinking Fountain** – Unknown date The Drinking Fountain is located just to the west of the three-tiered fountain. It is constructed of coarse grained concrete. Since the date of the drinking fountain is unknown, it is a non-contributing resource.

Lake Preston Tourist Park Historic District
Name of Property

Kingsbury County, South Dakota
County and State

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page # 6

Although there have been modern additions to the park, they do not alter the appearance or the feeling of the historical character of the park. The Lake Preston Tourist Park Historic District retains a fairly high degree of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship and conveys the feeling of its past environment.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page # 7

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The Lake Preston Tourist Park Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for the entertainment and recreation that was provided to the town of Lake Preston and the surrounding area. The original swimming pool that was constructed in the park was only the second outdoor swimming pool in the state of South Dakota.¹ An average of 13,000 bathers visited the pool annually, many of who were travelers from various areas of the country. The park's bandstand was the site of Sunday evening band concerts every week during the summer, drawing crowds of 600 to 1,000 people. The park also provided games such as shuffleboard, horseshoes, outdoor checkers, tennis, and baseball. The largest event that was held at the park each year was the Annual Watermelon Days festival. The festival, which was held on Labor Day weekend, was a celebration of the end of summer, with 10,000 to 20,000 people attending. The various events at the park were a time for the community to come together and socialize, to catch up on the happenings in the region, and enjoy the park facilities. It was a time for social interaction, for entertainment, and recreation. The Lake Preston Tourist Park events and facilities defined summer recreation in Lake Preston for many decades.

Historical Background

The famous explorer General John C. Fremont came to the area that is today Kingsbury County in 1839. He discovered a lake and named it Lake Preston, after William Campbell Preston, a senator from South Carolina. Forty years later, in 1879, settlers came to the area and established a town near the lakeshore, about a mile east of the present town's location. A post office was established and the town was named Preston. A general mercantile store and a drug store were built at the Preston town site. However, when the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad came through they laid the tracks away from the town site, so the town moved.² In July 1881 the new town was laid out on 120 acres of land donated to representatives of the Railroad Company by settlers in the vicinity. The Lewis Brothers store was moved to the new location, and in August and September of that year, T.H. Maguire erected the first building. In October another building, the Starling House, was built by Francis Starling.³ The very first newspaper was issued by C.W. Starling on October 20, 1881, just three months after the town was begun at its present site. The town also boasted a doctor and a dentist.⁴

¹ *The Lake Preston Times* 19 August 1926, 1

² William R. Lewis, *An Historical Memento* (Lake Preston, South Dakota Centennial Committee, 1979) 1.

³ Donald Dean Parker, *Kingsbury County: History of Our County and State* (South Dakota State College: History Department, 1960) 7K.

⁴ Lewis, 2.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page # 8

The new town site was incorporated in 1881, but the name of the town was changed to Lake Preston in order to avoid confusion with the town of Preston, Minnesota. In November of 1881, a new post office building was established. By 1882, the town was reported to have a population of several hundred. That fall, C.W. Seefield erected the first grain elevator, and the first school house was built and opened in early September 1882 with 14 pupils. Development of the town continued, and in 1883 the Winona Milling Company built a large warehouse, and the first church building was erected for the Congregational Church. The Merchants Exchange Bank was established in 1884 and constructed a building the next year. By 1886, the town had a population of 300 and there was an average of seven railroad car loads of lumber a week being shipped in.⁵ By the early 1900s, Lake Preston was a prosperous town with three hotels, an opera house, two furniture stores, three banks, four elevators, a harness shop, machine shop, jewelry store and clock repair, a meat market, several grocery stores, a barber shop, beauty shop, real estate office, livery stable, shoe repair shop, novelty shop, several lumber yards, a drug store, a G.A.R. Hall, and the newspaper office. The town even had its own pop bottle factory and a flour mill. In 1907, the flour mill was turned into one of the earliest power plants in the area, furnishing electric lights.⁶

Historical Significance

In 1922, the city of Lake Preston purchased a ten-acre tract of land from a local farmer to establish a tourist camp, baseball park, and tennis courts. As soon as the land was secured, the local tennis club began work on preparing the grounds to construct tennis courts. Likewise, those interested in baseball did the same. After the baseball park was completed, it was also used by the Lake Preston School for football and track. Mayor J. H. Lloyd had a small swimming pool constructed in the park for children. The pool was complete with a sandy beach and dressing rooms located in the rest rooms built by the Lake Preston Commercial Club. The club also provided toilets and fenced the park grounds. When the plat was made for the park the city board discovered that more land was needed. An area measuring 198 feet east to west by 481 feet north to south was purchased to the east of the original tract of land.⁷

Since the children had a swimming pool in the park, the Commercial Club decided that the adults needed a swimming pool as well. A subscription paper was circulated and money was collected to add a pool for the adults as soon as plans could be made. However, it was not until 1925 that the effort truly began. In the summer of 1925, twelve to fourteen members of the Commercial Club traveled to Pipestone, Minnesota to visit their swimming pool and bathhouse. Otto Thorsnes, who was a local businessman and community leader, and others who had visited Pipestone prepared plans, calculated costs, and discussed the advantages to the city of Lake Preston of constructing a

⁵ Ibid, 5-6.

⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷ *The Lake Preston Times* 20 July 1922, 5; 27 August 1936, 1; Kingsbury County Assessor's Office records.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page # 9

swimming pool. On July 16, 1926, a committee consisting of Otto Thorsnes, P.R. Phinney, J.W. Lawler, Dr. C.A. Butler, and Charles Lance was appointed to prepare a plan for raising the funds and building the bathhouse and swimming pool in the Tourist Park. On Tuesday, July 20, at 10:00 A.M., the finance committee of the Commercial Club started out to secure \$100 contributions. Before dinner that day, \$1,600 had been collected and by that night the amount had reached \$2,900. Before noon on Wednesday, July 21, the minimum amount that they had been trying to raise, \$3,500, had been collected and before the day was over they had raised \$4,000. In less than two days the committee had raised \$4,350 to construct a swimming pool and bathhouse.⁸

That very day, July 21, 1926, work was begun on the construction of the original swimming pool and bathhouse under the supervision of Otto Thorsnes. Local citizens provided the labor and area farmers with horses and equipment removed the dirt from the interior of the swimming pool. The ladies of the Civic Club provided the workers with lunch and dinner.⁹ Completed on September 2, 1926, the original pool was built entirely of cement and measured 70x140 feet, with a spoon shaped bottom ranging in depth from 28 inches around the edge to eight feet, six inches in the deep part of the spoon, over which were two spring boards for diving. The pool contained 300,000 gallons of water which was filtered through a chlorine purifier that was purchased from a company in Long Island, and the city engineer built a special vacuum to sweep the sediment from the pool. The swimming pool was advertised as the "Sanitary Swimming Pool". Colored electric lights were picketed on the fence surrounding the pool and there were seats around the outside of the fence for spectators. The bath house was 18x84 feet and contained a business office, a lady's dressing room and a men's dressing room, both equipped with hot and cold water showers and toilets, and a laundry room and a refreshment stand.¹⁰ When it was constructed, the Lake Preston swimming pool was only the second outdoor swimming pool in the state of South Dakota.

The swimming pool and bathhouse were the first major additions to the park, but a series of park improvements continued throughout the 1920s and 1930s, financed with funds generated from the pool. The children's play pool that had been constructed in 1922 with the establishment of the Tourist Park was converted to a fountain in 1929. The three-tiered fountain was installed and the cement basin of the old pool was turned into a fish pond and water lily bed.¹¹ The basin is currently used as a flower bed.

Also around 1929, two tourist cabins were built in the park just north of where the present Quonset huts are located, with funds produced from the swimming pool. Late in the summer of 1930, three more cabins were constructed, and in the summer of 1936, two more cabins were built

⁸ *The Lake Preston Times* 22 July 1926, 1.

⁹ *The Lake Preston Times* 5 August 1926, 1.

¹⁰ *The Lake Preston Times* 19 August 1926, 1; 30 June 1927, 3; 26 June 1930, 1-3.

¹¹ *The Lake Preston Times* 25 July 1929, 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page # 10

as a Works Progress Administration project. Also as part of the WPA project, sewer and water connections were made to all of the cabins and the porches were screened in. The cabins were popular with tourists traveling through the area and were frequently utilized.¹² The cabins were torn down at an unknown date after 1950.

In 1933, a new band stand was built to replace an earlier portable band stand. The band stand, which was dedicated on June 13, was built as part of a relief project. During the summer months in the 1920s to 1940s the Lake Preston High School band gave concerts in the park on Sunday evenings. The Sunday concerts were very popular, drawing crowds of nearly 1,000, almost the population of the entire town. At one special concert in the late 1930s, bands from Flandreau and Dell Rapids joined the Lake Preston musicians and nearly 6,000 people attended the evening performance.¹³ Also constructed in August 1933 were the two pillars which flank the park entrance. A local artist, R. Hegglund, was the architect for the project. The pillars were paid for by contributions from local businessmen and others. Hegglund was also authorized to create a monument which was to be inscribed with the names of individual who were instrumental in the development of the park.¹⁴ However, the monument was not constructed and placed in the park until three years later, in 1936.

The years from 1936 to 1939 saw many improvements and additions to the park. In 1936, three sets of horseshoe pits were added with two iron lamp posts on each side, as well as a large, 10'x'10' outdoor checker board. Also, a picnic shelter with an open fireplace for cooking was constructed, along with the park sign that arches over the south entrance to the park. In 1939, four concrete shuffleboard courts were added. In 1938, plans were begun to extend the park to the south to make room for a camping area. In 1939, 200 feet of additional land to the south was purchased for both a camping area and a picnicking area, and in the spring of 1941 the new areas of the park were landscaped with 100 trees. All of these improvements were funded by profits made from the swimming pool.¹⁵

Not many changes or additions to the park took place after 1941 due to World War II. It was not until the late 1940s and early 1950s that work on the park began again. In 1948 lights were added to the Baseball Park, and in 1950 the two metal Quonset storage buildings were added. The buildings were actually constructed for the Commodity Credit Corporation, who used the buildings for corn storage, on land leased by the Corporation from the city. The buildings are currently used as a recycling center.¹⁶

¹² *The Lake Preston Times* 14 August 1930, 1; 20 August 1936, 1; 24 July 1947, 5.

¹³ *The Lake Preston Times* 27 August 1936, 1; 10 June 1999, 1.

¹⁴ *The Lake Preston Times* 17 August 1933, 1.

¹⁵ *The Lake Preston Times* 17 June 1937, 1; 21 July 1938, 1; 15 May 1941, 1; 29 May 1941, 8; Kingsbury County Assessor's Office records.

¹⁶ *The Lake Preston Times* 24 June 1948, 1; 22 June 1950, 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page # 11

Over the years there has been various playground equipment installed in the park. The first mention of playground equipment at the Tourist Park was in 1926.¹⁷ Through the 1930s there is mention of swings, slides, merry-go-rounds, and an ocean whirl. Through the 1940s and 1950s there is mention made of making repairs to playground equipment, however, it isn't until 1953 that there is specific detail given of new playground equipment purchased. In the summer of 1953 a new swing set with four swings, two trapeze bars, four rings, and two see-saws was installed, along with a swing set of three nursery style swings for infants.¹⁸

The park, which was originally named the Tourist Park, was dedicated to Otto Thorsnes on September 1, 1953, and renamed Thorsnes Park. Thorsnes, who died in 1962, was a leading citizen of the community. He was a self-taught engineer and designed the park's swimming pool and supervised its construction. Since the park's inception, he served on the Commercial Club committee that oversaw the park's development and was an active promoter of the park. In addition to designing the original swimming pool, he also had a major part in the planning and construction of many buildings in Lake Preston, including the first Kingsbury County Memorial Hospital and the Church of God. He was a member of the Board of Education for 17 years and supervised the construction of the town's High School. He also planned the city water and sewer system, built the city's first fire engine, made one of the first radios in town, and devised a rain gauge and kept weather records for many years. He was also a civic leader, serving as the city engineer, as police chief for 26 years, a city council member, and mayor for several years.¹⁹

Around 1965 or 1966, the state department of health advised Lake Preston authorities that the original 1926 swimming pool no longer met state requirements. The city employed an engineer to present cost figures for modernizing the pool to meet the state requirements. In March 1966, Lake Preston city officials, after consulting with a Bureau of Outdoor Recreation representative, filed an application for a \$30,000 matching grant for an extensive improvement program for the swimming pool and park. The bulk of the money, \$52,000, was used for modernizing the swimming pool. The grant was approved in August 1967, and in March 1968, construction was begun on the new swimming pool, and was completed in June of that same year. Other improvements made included an overnight camping area with power and water facilities, addition of 16 picnic tables and 8 grills, construction of a park shelter, and improvement of the tennis courts.²⁰ From old photographs, it appears that although the swimming pool was modernized in 1968, it kept the same east to west oriented oval shape as the original. The current swimming pool is a smaller, rectangle shape oriented north to south. According to local sources, the current swimming pool was constructed sometime between 1985 and 1990.

¹⁷ *The Lake Preston Times* 2 September 1926, 1.

¹⁸ *The Lake Preston Times* 18 June 1953, 1.

¹⁹ *The Lake Preston Times* 31 August 1989, 1; Lewis, 52.

²⁰ *The Lake Preston Times* 6 April 1967, 1; 7 August 1967, 1; 6 June 1968, 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page # 12

Although the park had been renamed Thorsnes Park in 1953, over the year's people began referring to it as the City Park or East Park. On August 27, 1989, as part of the local Watermelon Days festival, the park was rededicated. At the rededication a new wooden sign saying, "Welcome To Thorsnes Park, Lake Preston, SD", was added to the northwestern corner of the park. A flowerbed surrounds the sign.

The latest improvement to the park was the restoration of the bandstand in 1999. The Progressive Community Women of Lake Preston raised money for the project through proceeds from a parade of homes and through donations from individuals and community groups. In 1998 the group was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Mary Chilton DAR Foundation to help with the restoration. The project included replacing the roof and repairing the floor and outside structure, as well as replacing the steps. The total cost for the project was a little more than \$20,000. The bandstand was rededicated on June 13, 1999, with a dedication ceremony modeled after the original dedication ceremony held on June 13, 1933. The events for the rededication included games and family activities, a softball game, and potluck supper, followed by a short program, ribbon cutting, and community band concert in the bandstand.²¹

The Lake Preston Tourist Park is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A because the park was significant to the community of Lake Preston for the entertainment and recreation that it provided to the town and the surrounding area. The original swimming pool was only the second outdoor swimming pool in the state. People from all over the country would stop on their way through Lake Preston to "take a dip". There were even reports of travelers driving 100 or 200 miles out of their way to take a swim. The swimming pool quickly became extremely popular not only with the town's people, but also with people from surrounding areas. By 1937, it was estimated that at least 13,000 bathers visited the pool annually, and the pool was only open from June through Labor Day.²² The pool also offered swimming lessons each summer, with each town in the region assigned certain weeks during the summer in which their children could come for lessons. The swimming pool and park put Lake Preston "on the map" in the 1920s to 1940s. But there were also other community events that took place at the Tourist Park every summer. During the 1920s to 1940s, every Sunday evening during the summer the Lake Preston High School band would give a concert from the bandstand. People would pull their cars up around the bandstand, sometimes six to nine rows deep, and listen to the concerts that lasted for two or three hours. The *Lake Preston Times* would list the music selection each week for the upcoming concert on the bottom of the front page of the paper. A popular tradition was for people to spend Sunday afternoon at the swimming pool, enjoying the cool water, then have a picnic in the park, and listen to the band concert in the evening. The concerts were community events, with an average of 600 to 1,000 people attending.

²¹ *The Lake Preston Times* 10 June 1999, 1.

²² *The Lake Preston Times* 17 June 1937, 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page # 13

During this time, the population of Lake Preston itself was only around 1,000 plus, and the concerts drew almost that many people every week. The swimming pool also reported that on Sundays there could be as many as 1,000 people swimming over the course of the day. The Sunday afternoon swims and evening band concerts were a time for the community to come together and socialize, to catch up on the happenings in the region, and enjoy the park facilities. It was a time for social interaction, for entertainment, and recreation.

Another popular community event that took place in the Lake Preston Tourist Park was the annual Watermelon Days. The event was held every year on Labor Day weekend from 1912 to 1957, with the exception of 1942 to 1949 due to World War II. The event would begin with a parade downtown and a noon band concert held in the middle of the street. The activities would then move to the park with various games and activities, free swimming at the pool, a baseball game, and all the watermelon you could eat. There would be another band concert in the afternoon, and a third one in the evening to end the day. The festival would draw from 10,000 to 20,000 people, which meant that every citizen of Lake Preston, the surrounding countryside, and any town within driving distance of Lake Preston must have attended. Just as the Sunday evening band concerts, the Watermelon Days were a time for the community to come together for a time of fun and recreation and celebrate the end of summer.

There were also clubs formed around the various games available in the park. There was a shuffleboard club that individuals could join, pay dues, and participate in games and tournaments. There was also a horseshoe club for both adults and children, and a tennis club. These clubs, along with the picnic facilities, playground equipment, baseball park, and the planned events that occurred every summer, combined to make the Tourist Park the social and recreational center for Lake Preston and the surrounding community during the summer months. In a time before television, and video games, and mass movies, the park, with its swimming pool, weekly band concerts, picnic facilities, and playground equipment, was the place that Lake Preston citizens went during the summer months for entertainment and recreation. The Tourist Park was extremely significant to the community of Lake Preston during the period of significance because the park and its facilities and events defined summer recreation in Lake Preston.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9/10 Page # 14

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UTM CONTINUATION

5	<u>14</u>	<u>630100</u>	<u>4912850</u>	6	<u>14</u>	<u>629890</u>	<u>4912860</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the southeast corner of the intersection of US Highway 14 and Park Avenue South, proceed east, along the south curb line of Highway 14, 964 feet, then south 481 feet, then west 198 feet, then south 200 feet, then west 766 feet, then north 630 feet to the point of beginning. The boundary is roughly defined by US Highway 14 on the north, a fence line on the east, a fence line on the south, and Park Avenue South on the west.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes all of the property historically and currently associated with the park.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number Photos Page # 15

The following information applies to all photographs.

Name of photographer: Jill Gray
Date of photograph: August 2001
Location of original negative: South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office

Photographs:

1. Direction: Southeast
 View of: Wooden sign, entrance pillars, monument, and canon
2. Direction: Southeast
 View of: Entrance pillar
3. Direction: Northeast
 View of: West side of monument
4. Direction: Southwest
 View of: East side of monument
5. Direction: Northeast
 View of: Entrance Arch
6. Direction: Northwest
 View of: Band Stand
7. Direction: Northeast
 View of: Bathhouse and swimming pool
8. Direction: Northwest
 View of: Fountain, with drinking fountain, bathhouse, pool, and climbing structure in background
9. Direction: Southeast
 View of: 1936 Picnic Shelter
10. Direction: Southeast
 View of: Restroom/Refreshment Stand

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

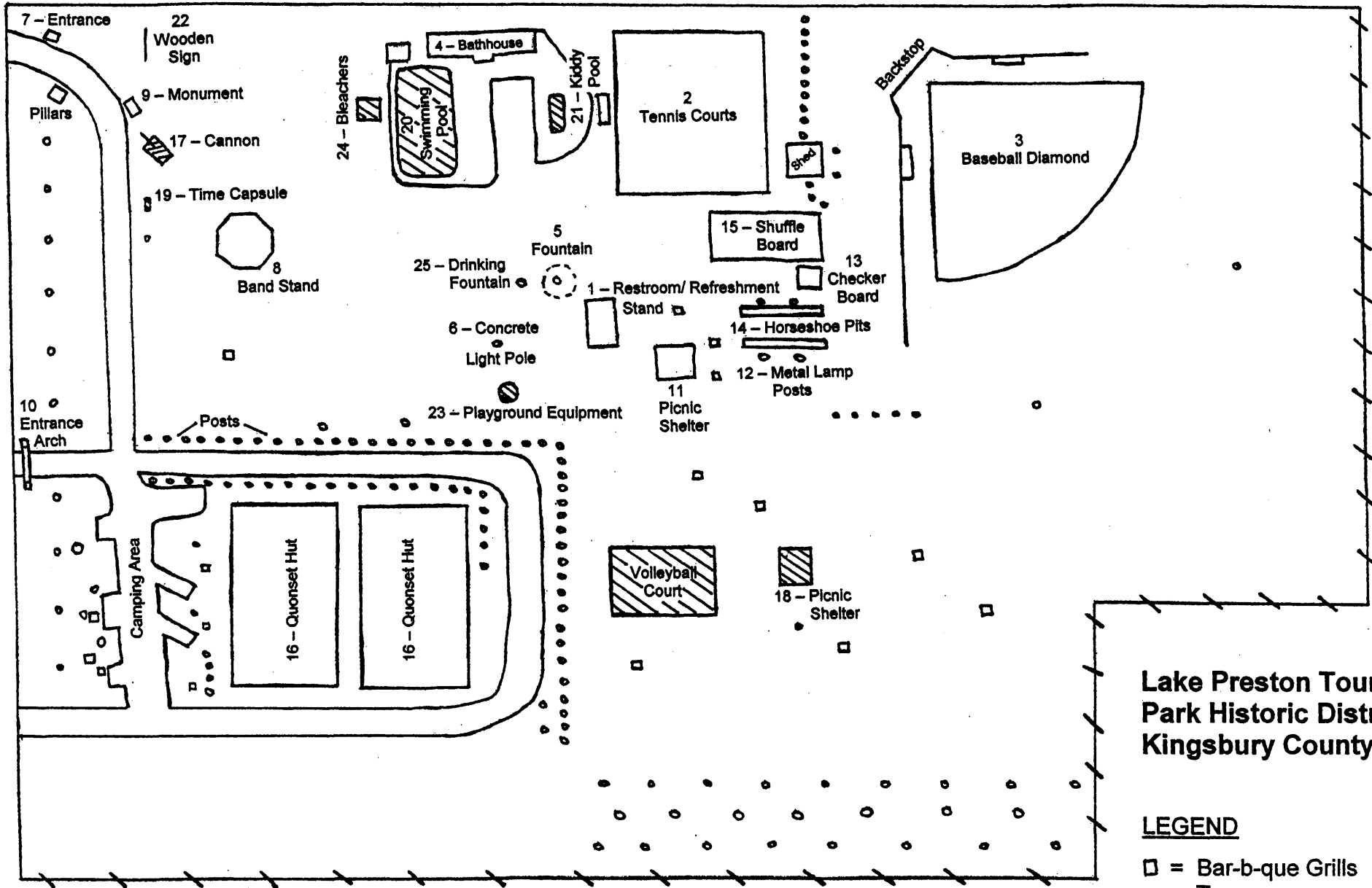
Continuation Sheet

Section number Photos Page # 16

11. Direction: Southwest
View of: Concrete Light Pole
12. Direction: Northwest
View of: Shuffle board courts, Tennis courts
13. Direction: Southwest
View of: Shuffle board courts, checkboard, metal lamp posts, horseshoe pits, 1936 picnic shelter, playground equipment
14. Direction: East
View of: Metal lamp posts
15. Direction: Northeast
View of: Baseball Diamond
16. Direction: Northeast
View of: Park overview of eastern end of park
17. Direction: Southeast
View of: Quonset Huts
18. Direction: Northeast
View of: Southeastern corner of park with grassy area, 1968 picnic shelter on right, and 1936 picnic shelter in left back corner

HIGHWAY 14

SOUTH PARK AVENUE



**Lake Preston Tourist
Park Historic District,
Kingsbury County**

LEGEND

- = Bar-b-que Grills
- = Trees
- ⋈ = Fence Line

- = Contributing
- ▣ = Non-contributing

