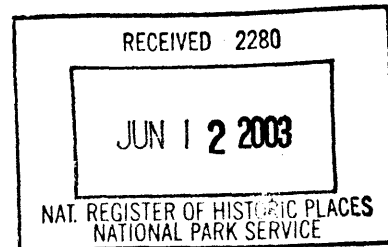


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**United States Department of Interior
National Park Service**



**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Carson Park Baseball Stadium
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number	Carson Park Drive, Carson Park	N/A	not for publication
city or town	Eau Claire	N/A	vicinity
state	Wisconsin	code WI	county Eau Claire
		code 35	zip code 54702

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Alicia T. Cox June 5, 2003
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State Historic Preservation Officer-Wisconsin

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 official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Carson Park Baseball Stadium

Eau Claire

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

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.

See continuation sheet.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Patrick Andrews

7/25/2003

for Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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

structure

site

object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

contributing	noncontributing
	buildings
	sites
1	structures
	objects
1	0 total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources is previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE:sports facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: sports facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th & Early 20th Century American Movements

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation Sandstone

Walls Sandstone

Concrete

roof Asphalt

other Steel

Narrative Description

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

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Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

Carson Park Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

DESCRIPTION

The Carson Park Baseball Stadium is located in the south-central area of Carson Park in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Carson Park is located west and north of the Chippewa River on the west side of the city. Consisting of approximately 134 acres, it is the oldest, largest and most popular park in the city. The baseball stadium was a WPA funded project completed in 1936 as professional minor league baseball was becoming popular in Eau Claire.

Typical of ballpark planning, the home plate-pitcher's mound-second base axis runs southwest to northeast to avoid interference from the summer sun. The field is mostly square and enclosed with a chain link fence that is eight feet high on the south and west and ten feet high on the east and north. Distance from home plate to the center field wall is 388 feet. The distance from home plate to the right field wall is 312 feet; the distance from home plate to the left field wall is 320 feet. The center field fence where the scoreboard is located is 125 feet long. The right and left field fences intersect the center field fence at 150 degree and 120 degree angles respectively.

The stadium is semi-circular in shape with a five-sided outside wall. The superstructure has wide flange steel framing with poured concrete supports. The exterior surface is rough-cut Dunnville sandstone from Downsville, Wisconsin. The basic mass of the stadium consists of 20-foot high rusticated sandstone block walls in five sections that join at oblique angles to create a semi-rounded appearance. The two larger end sections are 48 feet long and the three middle sections are 30 feet long. The two end sections are each divided into four bays 12 feet in length. The three middle sections are each divided into two bays 15 feet in length. All of the bays are marked by nearly full-height, rusticated sandstone pilasters with sandstone caps. The side walls slope to the inside of the stadium at a 30-degree angle. On top of the outside wall is a short decorative painted metal railing that follows along the top of the five sections. There is a four-foot opening between the top of the railing and the edge of the roof. The roof is a single-pitch flat surface of rolled asphalt roofing on 1" x 8" wood boards laid on 2" x 8" roof joists.

On the outside of the stadium there are two sets of large swing-out hinged entrance doors and three smaller utility doors. The main sets of doors are both located on the fourth bay in from the end of the stadium. The wooden entrance doors have four iron strap hinges and an iron handle/latch. There are eight eight-over-eight double-hung sash windows. Four of these windows have paired four-over-four double hung sash windows on either side. The doors and windows have segmental sandstone lintels and poured concrete sills. Exterior wall surface lighting is provided by two pairs of metal gooseneck lamps on either side of the exterior walls. At each of the main entrances there is a short masonry wall and decorative metal fence that provides an accessible route for spectators to the two entrances and

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Continuation Sheet**

Carson Park Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

Section 7 Page 2

ticket booths inside. A large 10 x 20 foot sign is located in the middle bay about eight feet above ground. The solid metal letters are placed on a decorative painted metal background.

The sheltered grandstand area is semi-circular and similar to the exterior with two 24-foot bays on either side and a central bay 30 feet in length. Six rows of vertical steel columns divide the bays and seating areas. The seating consists of 15 rows of wooden benches with wooden risers. The benches are three feet deep with risers 1 1/2 feet high. The seating in the lower one-third of the side bays and lower half of the center bay consists of aluminum benches and backs. Four rows of new aluminum box seats were added to the existing box seats directly in front of the grandstand in 1998. These contoured seats have flip-up bottoms and arm rests. The sheltered grandstand capacity is 1500.

Metal and wood stairs lead to the wood frame press box/announcer's booth on the roof. The booth is 30 feet long, six feet tall, and six feet deep and situated on the inside edge of the roof along the center bay. There are decorative pennants on the six outside corners of the roof and light poles on both ends on the inside edge.

The area under the grandstand has the same shape and similar ground area as the seating area above. The floor is poured concrete. The 7 1/2-foot walls are sandstone on the outside with interior and partition walls of concrete block. The ceiling is metal with bands of fluorescent lighting. The floor plan is laid out in three parallel sections. The outer section has two ticket booths, an entry/foyer, and a concession and sales area. The middle section is an open aisle leading to the women's washroom on the north side and umpire's room on the east side. The inner section includes the men's washroom and team rooms, custodial/storage space and passageway to the seating area. The original 16 x16-inch poured concrete Y-shaped piers are still visible and functional. All interior surfaces are painted and well illuminated.

One large section of metal bleachers is located adjacent to and just east of the main grandstand, along the first base line. This section is 75 feet long and 24 feet deep with 13 rows of benches. Another section of metal bleachers is located adjacent to and just north of the main grandstand, along the third base line. This section is 120 feet long and 40 feet deep with 18 rows of bleachers. Total bleacher capacity is 1500, resulting in a total seating capacity of grandstand and bleachers of approximately 3000.

There are eight light towers that are distributed evenly around the perimeter of the ball field. Outfield and infield turf is a mix of rye and bluegrass. Infield base lines, foul lines and warning track are raked crushed limestone. A drainage system installed in 1997 handles heavy rains. The scoreboard is 10 feet by 30 feet and illuminated. There are two bull pens on either side of the field. There are two concrete

**United States Department of the Interior
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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Carson Park Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

Section 7 Page 3

block utility buildings of recent construction that are within the site boundaries but are not included in the count because of their small scale.

Alterations to the basic masonry exterior structure have been minimal since the stadium opened in 1937. Blueprints dated 1948 indicate the box seating area was added at that time. Archival photos show the original press box to have been a tiny two-person shelter. A photo from the early 1950s shows a much-expanded press box. The current press box is about 2/3 the size of the booth shown in the 1950s photo.

A major restoration/renovation project was completed in 1998 at a cost of \$560,000. The stadium was made accessible to the handicapped with new entryways and ramps on the north and east sides. Most of the major work occurred under the grandstand area: new restrooms were built, along with an office area and umpire's room. The concession stand was expanded and modernized. New additional box seats and renovated grandstand benches were the major changes in the grandstand area. Exterior renovations included new metal work along the top of the grandstand, new metal fencing and window grates, downspouts, structure lighting and sign. Metal and wooden surfaces were re-painted and electrical and plumbing systems were updated. A newly designed and landscaped entrance plaza was added. The circular concrete apron features a bronze bust of Henry Aaron, who in 1952 was a rookie with the Eau Claire Bears. The sculpture is not included in the count because of its small scale.

Today, the overall condition of the interior and exterior of the stadium and grounds is excellent. Over the past ten years the Eau Claire community has recognized the historical and architectural value of the stadium. The future of the Carson Park baseball stadium as a regional recreational and cultural landmark seems to be secure.

8. Statement of Significance

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

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

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

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1936-1962

Significant Dates

1936

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

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.)

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 1

Eau Claire Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Carson Park Stadium is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of entertainment and recreation. It is further significant as one of the small number of baseball stadiums constructed under the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The total resource count is one contributing structure. The period of significance begins in 1936, with the construction of the stadium, and extends to 1962, the year of the dissolution of the minor league Eau Claire team.

The ballpark is located on the south side of Carson Park, a 134-acre multi-use recreational park established in 1915 with a gift of land to the City of Eau Claire from the heirs of William E. Carson, a prominent lumberman and banker. The park is surrounded by Half Moon Lake, an oxbow of the Chippewa River no longer connected to the river. Prior to being designated as a park, the land had been used for a lumber camp and sawmill; a colony for smallpox patients; and as pastureland for cows. Half Moon Lake itself was a holding pond for logs that were floated down the Chippewa River from the timberlands of northern Wisconsin.¹

Carson Park Stadium was built 1936-7 with funds provided by the Works Progress Administration (see Figs. 1-4). It was the first permanent home for the Eau Claire Bears, a minor league team affiliated with the Chicago Cubs. The Eau Claire Bears were organized in 1933, following many years of the city's proud participation in the national pastime. The first organized baseball game in the city was played by a local team, the "Clearwater Boys," in September 1867, and numerous amateur and professional club matches followed. Eau Claire teams participated in the Wisconsin State League around the turn of the century, and in 1910, Eau Claire joined the first Northern League.² By the advent of the Depression, Eau Claire residents were avid baseball fans, whose support of the local team—and the team's success—led to the construction of Carson Park Stadium.

The game of baseball is said to have been invented by Abner Doubleday in 1839, but many historians of the game argue that this is mere myth. "As no evidence has yet been produced to substantiate this account and a huge amount of evidence, both direct and indirect, contradicts it," writes Warren Goldstein, "it merits no further attention."³ It is more likely that the modern game evolved out of

¹ Jerry Poling and Diz Kronenberg, "Eau Claire Baseball History." Booklet printed in conjunction with the rededication of the Carson Park Ballpark/Stadium, June 15, 1998. [File] Eau Claire Public Library, Eau Claire, WI.

² Ibid., 6.

³ Quoted in Warren Goldstein, *Playing for Keeps: A History of Early Baseball* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989), 11.

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 2

Eau Claire Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

older traditional ball and stick games, such as “one-old-cat” and “rounders.” In 1845, Alexander Cartwright of the Knickerbocker Base Ball Club solidified the playing rules by writing them down; this marks the beginning of organized ball. The game remained a New England, club-based fraternal pastime until after the Civil War, which introduced men from across the country to the popular game. Upon their return home, enthusiasts organized local ball clubs. Club baseball became a small business, and by 1869, the Cincinnati Red Stockings claimed the first professional players. In 1871, the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players was organized, replaced in 1876 by the National League. Professional big league ball had been born.

The minor leagues were organized in 1877, serving as a kind of incubator for players that might advance to the majors. The terms “farm league” and “bush league” quickly became associated with the minors, as most of the ballparks were located in rural areas or small towns. The farm teams attracted strong and loyal local followings, and teams became closely tied to community identity.

The history of the development of baseball parks reflects the increasing national interest in the game, as well as the advent of new technologies. In the early days, most ballparks were rudimentary and temporary structures built of wood. There was no need to build ballparks to last, as teams often sprang up and died off within a single season and lacked an intensely loyal fan following. If a park burned down, another quickly took its place. Larger and more permanent structures rose in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, but they were still built of wood and highly susceptible to fire. Washington’s Griffith Stadium and New York’s Polo Grounds were both victims to fire during this time.⁴

Among the first truly modern, fireproof ballparks were Shibe Park in Philadelphia (1909), Forbes Park in Pittsburgh (1909), and Comiskey Park in Chicago (1910). All are now gone. Comiskey Park in particular reflected the philosophies of the City Beautiful Movement of the Progressive era. Its appearance was associated with an earlier, rustic age, yet its technology was cutting edge; it featured concrete reinforced with steel rods, double decks, fireproof elevators, telephones, electricity, and ramps. The park was a “monument to the game.”⁵ The addition of electric lights in 1938-1939 meant the introduction of night games, which drew more spectators by expanding traditional weekend afternoon games into “seven other Sundays” throughout the week.⁶

⁴ William Madden, Suzanne Fischer, and Paul Diebold, National Register nomination for Bush Stadium, Indianapolis, IN, 1995. Copy on file with Indiana SHPO, Indianapolis, IN.

⁵ Jules Tygiel, *Past Time: Baseball as History* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 56-57.

⁶ Quote attributed to Larry MacPhail in Leonard Koppett, *Koppett’s Concise History of Major League Baseball*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 191.

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Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 3

Eau Claire Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

During the years between World War I and the Depression, baseball was one of the country's most popular social activities, with a fan base irrespective of differences in gender, age, ethnicity, education, and social class. The financial hardships of the Depression touched even baseball, however, and the number of minor leagues dwindled from 25 in 1929 to only 16 in 1931 as attendance fell.⁷ Historian Jules Tygiel notes that in 1932 attendance at major league games dropped to under 7 million for the first time since the Black Sox scandal of 1919.⁸

Because of the notable drop in attendance, it is ironic that part of the solution to the national crisis of the Depression was the use of Works Progress Administration (WPA) funds to create new and improved baseball parks, such as Eau Claire's Carson Park Stadium. Baseball was regarded as a balm that could overcome troubled times and heal a nation, reflecting the sentiment of the earlier City Beautiful movement, which the city of Eau Claire not only subscribed to but also heartily endorsed in promotional literature. Eau Claire trumpeted its many parks and forest areas, claiming that "Eau Claire people are happier because they have beautiful parks where they can rest and enjoy trees, flowers, beauty, fresh air, sunshine, and sports."⁹

Established by executive order of President Roosevelt to provide employment for limited numbers of unemployed workers throughout the United States, the Works Projects Administration (WPA) operated from 1935-1943.¹⁰ By 1940, approximately 5 million projects had been undertaken, with Wisconsin ranking relatively high among the states receiving appropriations. Statistics for the year 1939, for example, ranks Wisconsin in the 124 percentile following fifth behind Pennsylvania, the highest ranking state at the 218 percentile. Funding for this program was administered annually by Congress, and although the types of projects varied from year to year, the provision for funds for public buildings—including baseball parks--consistently ranked second behind highway and street projects.¹¹

⁷ Robert Obojski, *Bush League: A History of Minor League Baseball*. (New York: Macmillan, 1975), 19.

⁸ Jules Tygiel, *Past Time: Baseball as History*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 88.

⁹ *Eau Claire, Wisconsin—The Poor Man's Paradise—The Capitalist's Opportunity—The Millionaire's Playground*. Promotional magazine, September 1922. Copy on file in the Chippewa Valley Museum, Eau Claire.

¹⁰ The program was named Works Progress Administration from 1935-1939. The federal "make work" initiatives originated with the Civilian Workers Administration (CWA), which operated from November 1933-May 1934. The CWA was absorbed by Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) from 1933-1935. The WPA in turn succeeded FERA.

¹¹ Debra K. Kellner, National Register of Historic Places nomination for Herbster Community Center, Bayfield County, WI, 1997. Copy on file with Wisconsin SHPO. See also Donald S. Howard, *The WPA and the Federal Relief Policy*. New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1943.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 4

Eau Claire Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

Baseball historian Michael Benson identifies nine WPA ballparks in America. He omits more than one—including Carson Park—so his book is clearly not without flaws. Yet it appears possible that Carson Park Stadium may be one of the oldest WPA ballparks in the country still in use. Holman Stadium in Nashua, NH, was built in the same year, but its debut game occurred on September 23, 1937, four months after the first game played at Carson Park.¹²

It is not, however, the oldest extant, masonry baseball stadium in Wisconsin. In 1925 the city of Madison constructed a municipal stadium, now known as Breese Stevens Field. The surrounding walls of this stadium were completed in the 1930s with funds from the Civil Works Administration.

The Eau Claire Common Council first approved the development of an athletic field at Carson Park using federal Civilian Works Administration (CWA) funds in December 1933.¹³ Site work commenced immediately but work was expected to be slow, with an anticipated opening date of 1935.¹⁴ Progress was delayed with repeated shortage of funds that led to work stoppages. Carson Park Baseball Stadium did not come to full development until early 1936, when architectural/engineering

¹² Michael Benson, *Ballparks of North America: A Comprehensive Historical Resource to Baseball Grounds, Yards, and Stadiums*. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., Inc., 1989). The nine WPA ballparks Benson identifies are: Sam Lynn Park, Bakersfield, CA (1940-41); Dwyer Stadium, Batavia, NY (1939); Legion Park, Great Falls, MT (1940); Clemens Field, Hannibal, MO (1936-39; first game October 1939); Grainger Stadium, Kinston, NC (1938; replaced 1951); Bengal Field, Missoula, MT (1938-69; burned); Holman Stadium, Nashua, NH (1937; first game played September 23, 1937); and Lane Field, San Diego, CA (1938-58; torn down). Holman Stadium, home to the Nashua Pride, touted as the oldest ballpark in New England, was extensively remodeled at a cost of \$4.5 million in 1996. Benson omits, at the least, Carson Park in Eau Claire and Bowman Field in Williamsport, PA. Bowman Field suffered serious structural damage from a May 1936 flood; repairs to the box seats and stadium grandstand were made using WPA funds. See James P. Quigel, Jr., and Louis E. Hunsinger, Jr., *Gateway to the Majors: Williamsport and Minor League Baseball* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

¹³ Lois Barland, *The Rivers Flow On: A Record of Eau Claire, Wisconsin from 1910-1960* (Stevens Point, WI: Worzalla Publishing Co., 1965), 211.

¹⁴ The *Eau Claire Leader* reported on 8 December 1933:

Decision to go ahead with the athletic field development at Carson Park was reached Thursday after the council, city engineer and E. B. Bundy, representing the heirs of the Carson estate, donors of the park of the city, had conferred with C. H. Ramsdell, Minneapolis, landscape engineer, who submitted a rough plan to the development.

The athletic field will take in the ground where the two present kittenball [softball] diamonds are located, and a considerable area on both sides of them, and at both ends. Most of this ground is already cleared of trees, and the principal job to start with will be grading and leveling off the area.

The athletic field will include a regulation football field, two or three practice fields, kitten ball diamonds, tennis courts and eventually some kind of inclosure which will blend in with the landscape. . . .

The football field would not be ready for use until 1935, as a year or more was required to grow grass or turf sufficiently thick. . . . Hence, the athletic park will be a development that will be necessarily slow.

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Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 5

Eau Claire Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

plans and specifications were completed by an unknown architect/engineer.¹⁵ The WPA funded the \$60,000 stadium.

It is assumed that construction of Carson Park Stadium began in 1936. The supervising engineer was Alec Garnock, engineer for the city of Eau Claire.¹⁶ Sandstone for the foundation was quarried at Downsville, WI, about 25 miles away.¹⁷ It is unknown from where the structural steel, concrete, and other materials were derived.

The first game was held Tuesday, May 7, 1937, with the Eau Claire Bears playing the Superior (WI) Blues under sunny afternoon skies. A football stadium and field immediately to its north and three tennis courts beyond center field neighbored the new stadium. The stadium seated 1,500 spectators, with portable bleachers on the third base line providing seating for another 750.¹⁸

Carson Park Ballpark/Stadium was dedicated June 1, 1937, with an evening exhibition game played under electric lights against the Minneapolis Millers of the Class AAA American Association. An estimated 5,000 people were in attendance. That summer, nearly 40,000 people attended games at the new park. From 1937 to 1962, the year the Eau Claire minor league team was discontinued, hundreds of thousands of fans made baseball games at Carson Park one of the city's most popular social activities.¹⁹

The Eau Claire Bears won the Northern League pennant in 1942, 1949 and 1951. Among the team's star players and three league rookies of the year was Henry Aaron, who signed with the Boston Braves in May 1952 and was assigned to Eau Claire. Aaron was "unhappy, real unhappy in Eau Claire,"

¹⁵ Original plans and specifications for the Carson Park Stadium dated March 1936 are found in the office of the Parks Superintendent, City of Eau Claire. The plans are identified as File A-17. The architect/engineer is not identified.

¹⁶ Harold "Diz" Kronenberg, *River City Sports: "Seasons to Remember"* (Eau Claire: private, n.d.), 9. Hoepfner-Bartlett was founded in 1896 by Frederick J. Hoepfner and William W. Bartlett. The firm was responsible for building many Eau Claire landmarks, including Mt. Washington Home, Sacred Heart Church, and Walter Brewery, among many others. The firm exists today as Hoepfner Building Corporation; it was sold out of the Hoepfner family in 1995. See Hoepfner-Bartlett file, Chippewa Valley Museum, Eau Claire. Alex Garnock served as city engineer from 1912-1917, 1919-1920, and again from 1932 to date unknown. From 1920-1932, he operated his own contracting business. See Barland, 421.

¹⁷ The *Eau Claire Leader* of 4 May 1937 reports that the sandstone is "Dunville stone." Dunville is a very small village near Downsville.

¹⁸ Poling and Kronenberg, 5. See also *Eau Claire Leader*, 4 May 1937. The stadium was not originally designed with bleacher seating. On 23 April 1937, the *Eau Claire Leader* reported that baseball fans petitioned the Eau Claire common council for the addition of bleacher seating along the first base line "in order to help promote better attendance." Bleacher seating was added on the third base line before opening day.

¹⁹ Poling and Kronenberg, 6.

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Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 6

Eau Claire Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

being young, homesick, and one of only four Blacks in the city at the time (three of the four were baseball players).²⁰ Astute Bears fans could see that Aaron was a very special player, however.²¹ He went up to the majors in 1954 and became baseball's all-time home-run king with the Atlanta Braves in 1974; retired in 1976; and was inducted into the baseball Hall of Fame in 1982. In 1994, he returned to Eau Claire to unveil a statue of himself as a young ballplayer.²²

The Bears became the Braves in 1954 after their parent club, the Boston Braves, moved to Milwaukee in 1953. They remained the Eau Claire Braves until 1962, when attendance dropped and the team was forced to quit operating. The decline and dissolution of the Eau Claire Bears is consistent with that of the destruction of the minors nationwide. The effects of suburbanization, automobiles, radio and televised broadcasts of major league games, and a "fundamental shift in urban leisure patterns" led to a collapse in live fan attendance, which in turn led to a decline in the number of minor league teams.²³ In 1950, there were 210 farm clubs, but by 1958, the number had dropped to only 157.²⁴ While interest in baseball never flagged, fans were far more likely to watch major league games from their easy chairs at home than from bleachers at the local minor league stadium.

Attempts to start a new minor league team in the city failed in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Nevertheless, since 1962, Carson Park Ballpark/Stadium has continued to be used as a regional baseball venue. In 1971, the amateur Eau Claire Cavaliers took the field; they have consistently been among the top amateur teams in the country and have never had a losing season. The Cavaliers are the latest in a series of club teams including the Leif Conoco Oilers in the 1940s and 1950s and Tommy's Miller Tap in the 1960s that have made Carson Park their home.²⁵

Other teams that currently use Carson Park Ballpark/Stadium are the American Legion and Babe Ruth teams, the amateur Eau Claire Bears and Pioneers, four high school teams, and the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire club team. In addition to baseball, the ballpark/stadium is the site of many other events, including high school graduations, circuses, festivals, and a variety of performances.

Throughout the years, the ballpark/stadium has been owned, maintained, and operated by the Eau Claire Parks and Recreation Department. The first alterations were made in 1947 with the addition of

²⁰ Henry Aaron, "Aaron, r.f." (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1968), 20-22.

²¹ William Anderson, A. I. A., personal interview with Joanne Raetz Stuttgen, Eau Claire, 24 April 2002. Anderson was the supervising architect for the stadium's 1997 renovation.

²² Poling and Kronenberg, 6.

²³ Tygiel, 148-49.

²⁴ Koppet, 263-64.

²⁵ Poling and Kronenberg, 6

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 7

Eau Claire Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

the boxseats.²⁶ In 1969, upgrades totaling \$75,000 increased the seating from 3,691 to 5,158 and made the lighting on the north side of the field compatible with that on the south.²⁷ In 1997, the stadium was renovated extensively for the first time since it was built. A community fund-raising effort helped provide a portion of the \$560,000 needed for new seating; concession stands; rest rooms, press box; a plaza, and other improvements.²⁸ The current stadium capacity is 3,749: 1,464 in the grandstand, 843 in the first base bleachers, and 1,442 in the third base bleachers.²⁹

The City of Eau Claire desires National Register listing for Carson Park Stadium in order to commemorate and celebrate its long history with the game of baseball and its active and varied role as a community entertainment and recreation center. For 25 years this was the location of minor league ball play that provided an important recreation and entertainment venue in the city. As noted above, approximately 5000 people attended the first game played at the stadium. While the number of minor league teams decreased dramatically in the 1950s, Eau Claire was able to retain a regional team into 1962. The stadium continues to be used for amateur play. The stadium is further significant as an intact example of a rare property type constructed during the Public Works era – the municipal baseball stadium.

Criteria Consideration G

The period of significance for the stadium extends beyond the 50 year mark because of the continued use and unbroken history of minor league play in the stadium until 1962.

²⁶ Plans and specifications for the addition of box seats dated 1947 are found in the office of the Parks Superintendent, City of Eau Claire. No architect/engineer is identified.

²⁷ Typewritten single sheet paper titled "Carson Park Stadium Development Status Report" found in Baseball file, Chippewa Valley Museum. No author, no date. The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire contributed \$55,000 of the total project cost.

²⁸ *Eau Claire Leader-Telegram*, 12 June 1998, B-1. Also, Phil Johnson., written communication to Joanne Raetz Stuttgen, 21 May 2002.

²⁹ The discrepancy between the reported 1969 capacity of 5,158 and the current capacity of 3,749 is noted but unexplained.

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Section 8 Page 8

Eau Claire Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

All historic photographs courtesy of Chippewa Valley Museum, Eau Claire, WI.

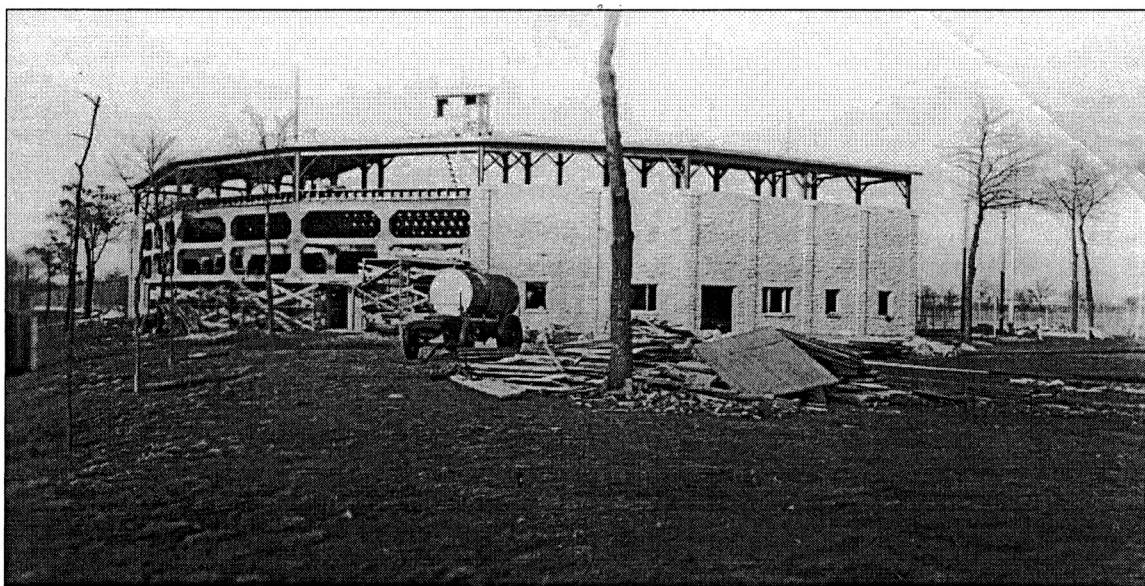


Figure 1 Building the stadium, 1936. Camera facing north.



Figure 2 c1936. Camera facing southwest.

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Section 8 Page 9

Eau Claire Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin



Figure 3 1939. Camera facing southeast.

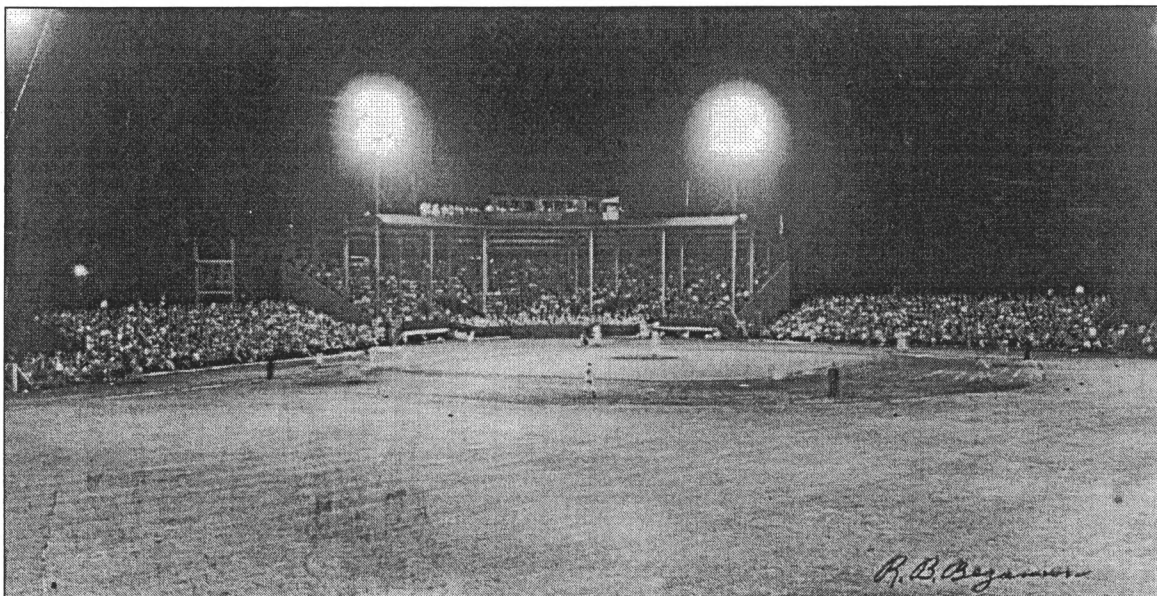


Figure 4 All Star game under the lights, 1951. Camera facing southwest.

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Section 8 Page 10

Eau Claire Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

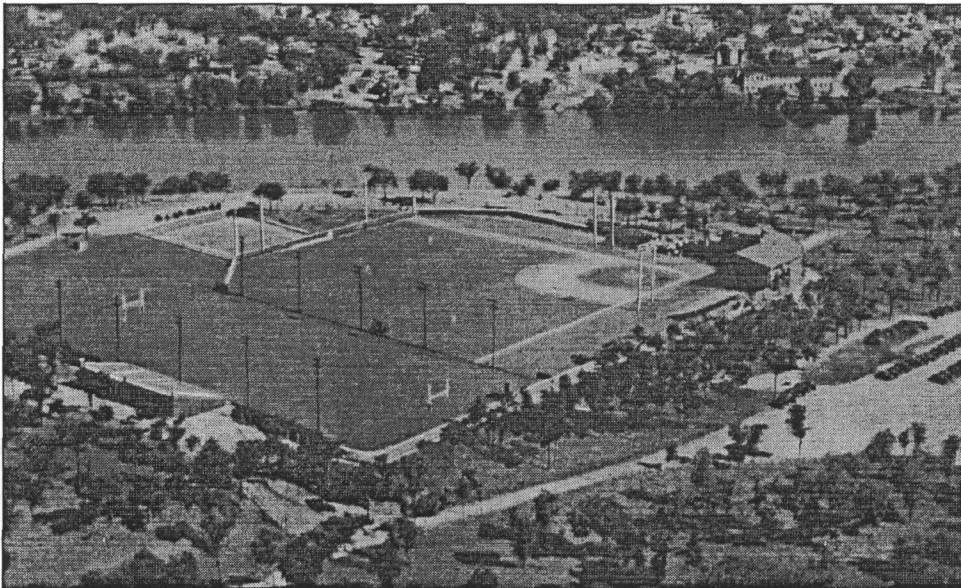


Figure 5 Aerial view, 1951. Camera facing east.

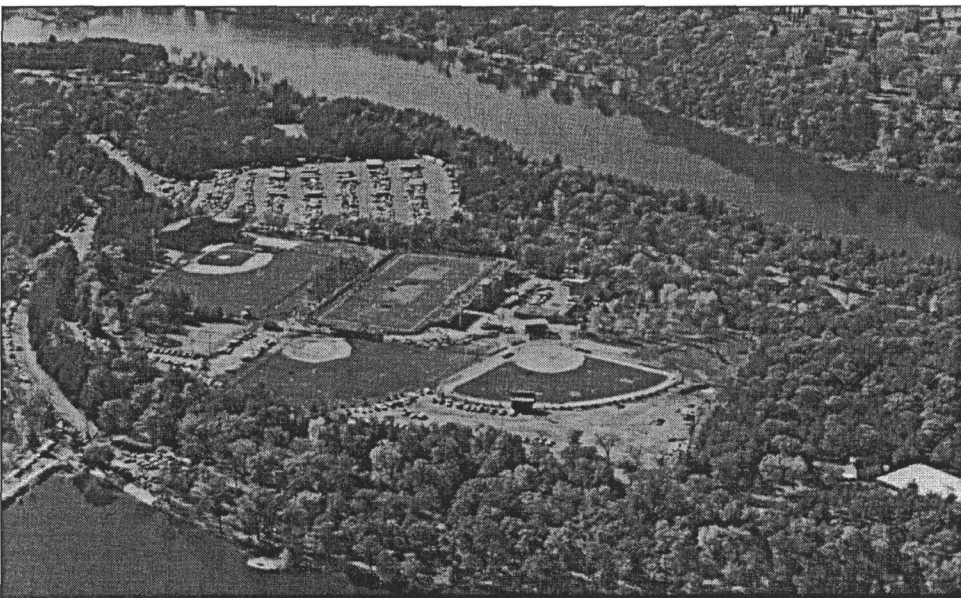


Figure 6 Aerial view, 1960. Camera facing west.

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Section 8 Page 11

Eau Claire Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin



Figure 7 Aerial view, 2002. Photo contributed by Eau Claire Parks Department.

Carson Park Baseball Stadium
Name of Property

Eau Claire
County and State

Wisconsin

9. Major Bibliographic References

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

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- 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:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property six acres

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

1 15 617000 4962395
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

See Continuation Sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Eric J. Wheeler and Joanne Raetz Stuttgart
organization
street & number 223 23rd St. N.
city or town LaCrosse state WI

date 6 May 2002
telephone (608) 785-7383 Eric
zip code 54601

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Carson Park Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

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Section 9 Page 2

Carson Park Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

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Section 10 Page 1

Carson Park Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, Wisconsin

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the east curblin, south of the stadium, at the junction of Carson Park Drive and Museum Drive, cross Museum Drive and continue along the curblin of Carson Park Drive about 360 feet to a point just past a stand of white pine trees. Turn right 90 degrees and go north down the grassy slope about 50 feet to a blacktop sidewalk located on the east edge of the parking area. Follow north along the blacktop sidewalk about 250 feet to the junction with a concrete sidewalk near a low stone wall. Follow the concrete sidewalk northeast along the west side of the stadium up a gentle slope about 350 feet to two ticket booths located at the entry to the football field. Turn right 90 degrees and go about 50 feet to the left field corner of the ball field. Then proceed east about 300 feet along the chain link left field fence of the ball field to point where the left field fence angles about 120 degrees southeast. (The left field fence defines the boundary between the baseball field and the football field adjacent to the north.) Proceed along a line parallel to and 30 feet east of the center field fence and in back of the scoreboard about 125 feet to a point 30 feet east of the southeast corner of the signboard. (At this point the chain link fence angles south about 150 degrees and becomes the right field fence. A separate chain link fence runs parallel to and 30 feet east of the right field fence. Part of this fence encloses the tennis court area east of the ball field.) Follow south along this fence from the junction with the tennis court fence about 150 feet. (At this point the fence angles to the southwest about 150 degrees.) Follow this outer 8-foot chain link fence west about 66 feet then turn 90 degrees south and proceed south about 60 feet to the south curb of Museum Drive. Follow along the curb of Museum Drive to its junction with Carson Park Drive and the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary encompasses the immediate surroundings of the baseball stadium and diamond. The boundaries exclude other areas and buildings of the park.

Carson Park Baseball Stadium

Eau Claire

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name/title	City of Eau Claire	date	6 May 2002
organization		telephone	(715) 839-4914
street&number	203 S. Farwell St.	zip code	54702
city or town	Eau Claire	state	WI

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. 470 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, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Continuation Sheet**

Section photos Page 1

Carson Park Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

PHOTOGRAPHS

Negatives on file with the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Photo #1 of 11.
CARSON PARK BASEBALL STADIUM.
Eau Claire, Eau Claire Co., WI.
Photo by Eric J. Wheeler, March 2002.
Camera facing north.

Photo #2 of 11.
CARSON PARK BASEBALL STADIUM.
Eau Claire, Eau Claire Co., WI.
Photo by Eric J. Wheeler, March 2002.
Camera facing northwest.

Photo #3 of 11.
CARSON PARK BASEBALL STADIUM.
Eau Claire, Eau Claire Co., WI.
Photo by Eric J. Wheeler, March 2002.
Camera facing east.

Photo #4 of 11.
CARSON PARK BASEBALL STADIUM.
Eau Claire, Eau Claire Co., WI.
Photo by Eric J. Wheeler, March 2002.
Camera facing northwest.

Photo #5 of 11.
CARSON PARK BASEBALL STADIUM.
Eau Claire, Eau Claire Co., WI.
Photo by Eric J. Wheeler, March 2002.
Main entrance. Camera facing north.

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Section photos Page 2

Carson Park Baseball Stadium
Eau Claire, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Photo #6 of 11.
CARSON PARK BASEBALL STADIUM.
Eau Claire, Eau Claire Co., WI.
Photo by Eric J. Wheeler, March 2002.
Camera facing east.

Photo #7 of 11.
CARSON PARK BASEBALL STADIUM.
Eau Claire, Eau Claire Co., WI.
Photo by Eric J. Wheeler, March 2002.
Camera facing north.

Photo #8 of 11.
CARSON PARK BASEBALL STADIUM.
Eau Claire, Eau Claire Co., WI.
Photo by Eric J. Wheeler, March 2002.
Camera facing east.

Photo #9 of 11.
CARSON PARK BASEBALL STADIUM.
Eau Claire, Eau Claire Co., WI.
Photo by Eric J. Wheeler, March 2002.
Camera facing northeast.

Photo #10 of 11.
CARSON PARK BASEBALL STADIUM.
Eau Claire, Eau Claire Co., WI.
Photo by Eric J. Wheeler, March 2002.
Concourse under stadium. Camera facing west.

Photo #11 of 11.
CARSON PARK BASEBALL STADIUM.
Eau Claire, Eau Claire Co., WI.
Photo by Eric J. Wheeler, March 2002.
Locker room. Camera facing east.

← N 1" = 100' approx.

SKETCH MAP
CARSON PARK BASEBALL STADIUM
EAU CLAIRE, EAU CLAIRE CO. WI

