

1830

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Squirrel Hollow County Park Historic District  
other names/site number none

2. Location

street & number Section 36, T-83N, R30W  not for publication  
city, town Jefferson  vicinity  
state Iowa code IA county Greene code 073 zip code 50129

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>7</u>	<u>2</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>10</u>	<u>3</u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		<u>0</u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		<u>3</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: The Conservation Movement in Iowa, 1857-1942  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.  
[Signature] 10/31/91  
Signature of certifying official Date  
State Historical Society of Iowa  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register. Entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet. [Signature] 12/23/91  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
for Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/county park

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Same

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Park Rustic

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concretewalls fieldstone

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roof asphalt shingleother 

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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### *Section 7: Physical Description*

Squirrel Hollow County Park covers a tract of about 60 acres in Section 36, T-83N, R-30W. It is located approximately eight miles south of Jefferson, Iowa, and about one mile east of State Highway 4, along the east side of the Raccoon River. An unmarked, graveled county road along the western edge of the park provides vehicle access from both the north and the south. This road follows the path of an early road which by some accounts was the main route from Fort Des Moines to Sioux City. A spur from the main road winds up through the park from the river and joins another unmarked county road at the northeast corner of the park. The topography in this area is hilly along the river, with upland wooded areas and marshes in the floodplain.

Ten park structures were built under the auspices of the Civil Works Administration, the Works Progress Administration, and the Public Works Administration between 1934 and 1936. These included a shelterhouse (SH-01), two latrines (SH-02, -03), two freestanding fireplaces (SH-04, -05), a stone retaining wall along the river bank (SH-06), two entrance signs (SH-07, -08), and a ball field (SH-09). Most of the structures are located in the southwest section of the park. In addition, the old river road was rebuilt and a winding drive was laid out through the park (SH-10). Other features of the 1930s park development included picnic tables, trash barrels, footpaths, and footbridges. These features have either been replaced or removed over the years. An old schoolhouse also was moved into the park for use as a second shelterhouse (SH-11). It was destroyed by a fire, although a concrete slab foundation and a stone chimney mark its location.

The Central Design Office at Iowa State College in Ames, supervised by State Landscape Architect John Fitzsimmons, most likely provided design assistance. Evidence suggesting as much consists of one undated construction drawing of park details, drawn by Arnold S. Stilwell, which is located in the Fitzsimmons Collection. County Engineer, S.J. Melson, supervised construction through 1935; C. Arthur Elliott, who replaced him as County Engineer in 1936, supervised project completion. According to a 1935 newspaper account, Con McNaught, a local resident, was responsible for the rockwork on the shelterhouse. Another local stonemason, William Bodenstien, has also been credited with building the shelterhouse. W.E. DeWitt supervised the construction of other buildings.

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Contributing structures include the shelterhouse (SH-01), two latrines with their associated trail steps (SH-02,-03), two stone fireplaces (SH-04, -05), the stone retaining wall (SH-06), the entrance portals (SH-07,-08), and the ball diamond (SH-09), and the road system (SH-10). Map 1 shows their locations.

Noncontributing structures include the remains of the schoolhouse (SH-11), a modern latrine (SH-12), and a 1976 stone monument with a brass plaque memorializing Rustler's Cove (SH-13). The monument, located near the south entrance portal, memorializes Rustler's Cove, a site along the Raccoon River where a group of notorious cattle rustlers concealed their booty before they were caught and sent to prison in 1882. This monument was erected in 1976 as part of the Iowa Bicentennial Project. The cove is now used as a public access area for boaters on the river.

The county park now sits adjacent to a wildlife refuge located west of the Raccoon River. Both the park and the wildlife refuge are managed by the Greene County Conservation Board. The refuge enhances the park's natural setting, but it is excluded from the nomination because this area was acquired after 1958 and there are no cultural features within its bounds.

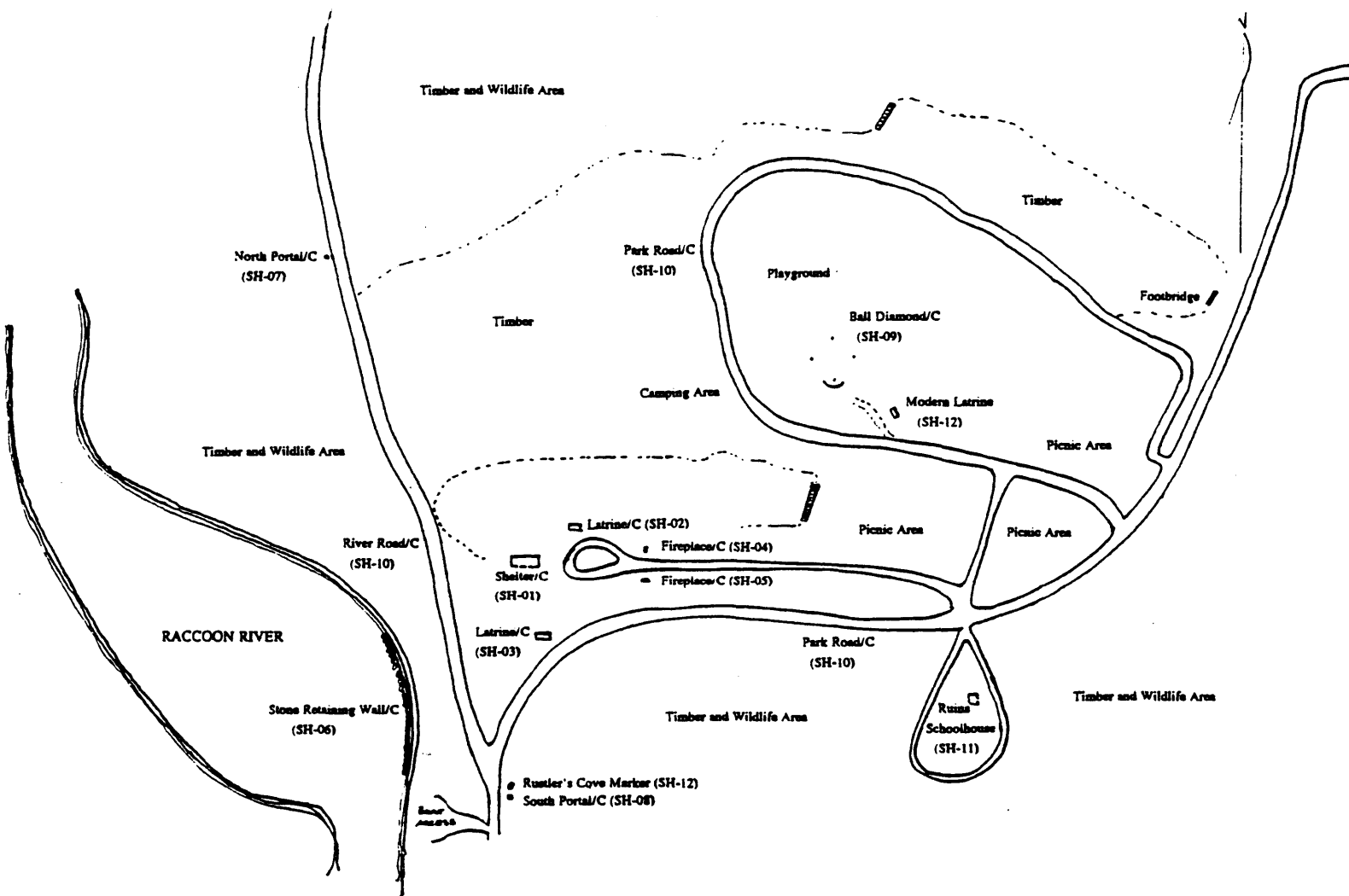
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**Map 1: Squirrel Hollow County Park  
Contributing and Noncontributing Resources**



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## Shelterhouse (SH-01)

The shelterhouse, situated on a promontory overlooking the Raccoon River, is the focal point of the park. In design it is typical of shelterhouses built in Iowa state parks. It is rectangular in plan, measuring 36'2" x 20'6", with the south front facade open. The side walls are stepped back, rising incrementally to full height at a point behind the roof ridge. The north rear and side walls are constructed of rough-cut, uncoursed fieldstone, without openings because the plan eliminates the need for windows. A segmentally arched stone fireplace is centrally located along the rear wall; its massive exterior chimney tapers slightly above the rake of the roof. Old mill stones are laid in a circle in the center of a concrete floor, and the following inscription has been lettered into the concrete: "1853 from [?] Mill; lettered by Roy Porterfield."

A side gabled roof is constructed of peeled log purlins and rafters covered with plank sheathing and asphalt shingles. Peeled logs also support the roof along the front and side facades. The original roof and log supports were of southern pine, brought up from Louisiana according to a contemporary newspaper account. These were destroyed in a fire, but the design was restored with like materials during the summer of 1966. The only visible difference appears to be the substitution of asphalt shingles, whereas the original roof covering undoubtedly was wood shingle.

The shelterhouse looks out onto a grassy lawn area on the south. The bluff gives way to steep slopes on the south, west, and north, natural topographic features which tend to isolate the shelterhouse area from the rest of the park.

## Latrines (SH-02, -03)

Two pit-vault latrines are situated at a distance from the shelterhouse on the south and north slopes, partially hidden from view by natural topography and mature vegetation. Both are of identical design, being rectangular in plan and measuring 11'x12'. Like the shelterhouse, the latrines are constructed of rough-cut, uncoursed fieldstone. A doorway is located off-center on one end; a small window sits off-center at the other end. A low-pitched gable roof constructed of peeled log purlins and 2"x4" rafters is covered with asphalt shingles. Stone slab steps have been wedged into the hillsides in order to provide pedestrian access to each of these structures.

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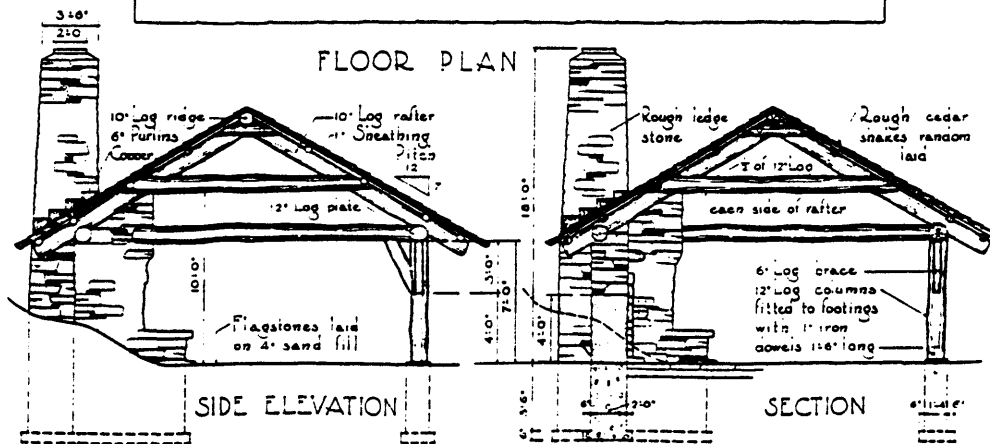
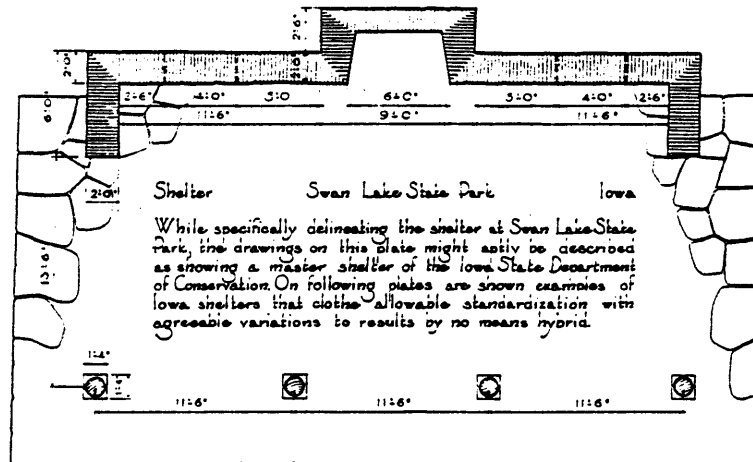
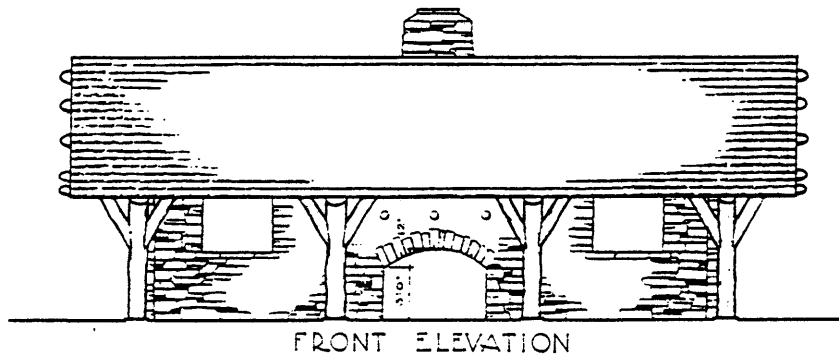
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*Attachments: "Master Shelter" Plan for Iowa Parks  
from Albert H. Good, PARK AND RECREATION STRUCTURES (1938)*

*Note: Several variations of this general plan were built in Iowa parks. The Squirrel Hollow shelterhouse has no windows along the rear wall, the primary building material is fieldstone rather than ledge stone, and the side walls enclose slightly more of the structure.*



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### Fireplaces (SH-04, -05)

East of the shelterhouse along the shelterhouse access road are located two freestanding fireplaces. These, too, are constructed of rough-cut, uncoursed fieldstone on a concrete base. They measure 3'8"x4'8" at the base, with a tapered chimney rising to approximately 6'. The fireboxes are lined with brick, and metal bars once formed a grate across the top. Both fireplaces are in need of repair, although their historical integrity remains intact. Stones have worked loose from the mortar, and the brick fireboxes are quite deteriorated.

### Stone Retaining Wall (SH-06)

A stone retaining wall is located along the east bank of the Raccoon River. This is a sizable structure, extending for approximately 200' along the river bank and rising 6'-8' high. According to C. Arthur Elliott, one of the engineers who supervised the project, the wall is 10'-15' thick, although the thickness is not obvious since fill was placed behind the wall. The purpose of this wall was to stabilize the creekbank at a wide bend in the river adjacent to the old river road which was rebuilt in the 1930s.

### Entrance Portals (SH-07,-08)

Two entrance portals are located along the north-south county access road. Both of them are in very poor condition, although their historical integrity remains intact. One of them is located near the northern park boundary, the other near the southern boundary. They are simple in design, consisting of a low stone pier measuring approximately 3' square and resting on a concrete base. The sign posts have been removed, and both of the piers are now overgrown with vegetation. One sign post was stolen some years ago and then returned. It is currently in storage, and the Greene County Conservation Board hopes to restore and reinstall it at some future date. This sign post is a customized design, with a cutout squirrel perched over the lettered signboard reading "Squirrel Hollow Park." A design plan for certain park details, including the signposts, appears to be the only construction drawing still in existence.





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### Ball Diamond (SH-09)

The ball diamond consists of the diamond itself and the playing field. There are no associated structures, such as dugouts and bleachers.

### Park Road System (SH-10)

The rebuilt river road which provides access to the park and the roads which wind through the park have been maintained as gravel roads since the 1930s. Because the layout and surface treatment remain unchanged, the road system contributes considerably to the historic character of the park.

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*Section 8: Statement of Significance**Summary Statement*

Squirrel Hollow County Park is significant under Criterion A as one of the earliest county parks to be established in Iowa and the first to be developed for recreational purposes under the auspices of federal New Deal programs (See Subsection IV of Section E, "Parks");\* Construction took place between 1934 and 1936, with most of the park completed when it was dedicated in 1935. It is also significant under Criterion C because it contains outstanding examples of Park Rustic architecture exhibiting characteristics that are typically associated with Iowa parks.

*Criterion A*

Squirrel Hollow County Park does not have the distinction of being the oldest county park in Iowa, but was among the first county parks to be developed for recreational use. The county park system in Iowa is of relatively recent vintage. In fact, one cannot really speak of a system of county parks until after 1955, when Iowa adopted legislation authorizing the formation of county conservation boards. Prior to then, very few county parks existed as such, though there were scores of unofficial picnic areas, walking trails, and fishing spots which had assumed a quasi-public status by virtue of constant use, and many of these areas eventually became county parks. According to survey data gathered by the Iowa State Planning Board, eighteen counties had set aside land for twenty-five parks as of 1935. Thomas MacBride had called for a system of county parks in Iowa as early as 1895, when he advocated reviving the practice of establishing public commons. In a sense, this is how the system evolved, but there were very few dedicated county parks as of 1942.

Squirrel Hollow exemplifies a common pattern in the history of county park formation in Iowa. The idea for a rural park in Greene County reportedly began in the mid-1920s, when two local men, B.F. Osborn of Rippey and Austin McCuen of the Pleasant Hill area, put their heads together and started making plans. County Supervisor Charles Wells and County Engineer S.J. Melson soon adopted the idea, and in about 1928 William Hansen, then a student at the University of Iowa, was hired to make a topographic map of the area under discussion. Squirrel Hollow, as the site was already known, had long been used by Greene County  
\*Within the Conservation Movement in Iowa MPS.

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residents as a picnic ground. In addition, a scenic old county road followed the Raccoon River through this area, but it had been closed for several years as the result of flood damage.

Squirrel Hollow was first proposed as a state park site, but this effort did not bear fruit. There were two major hurdles to overcome. First, land suitable for a park was in the hands of multiple landowners, and second, there were no readily available funds to purchase any land. Opportunity knocked in 1933, when the Jefferson Chautauqua Association disbanded. County Engineer S.J. Melson, who also happened to be an officer in the association, persuaded the trustees to use money remaining in the treasury to purchase twenty acres of timbered land along the Raccoon River offered by W.F. (Will) and Winifred Coon. The land included a portion of the old road. With the completion of this transaction in June of 1933, planning began in earnest. In accepting title from the previous owners and the Chautauqua Association, the County agreed to use the land "for park purposes and for partial use as a public road." Citizens of Jefferson and Rippey raised funds to purchase an additional forty acres in 1934 from three different property owners: Austin and Emily McCuen, Homer and Mildred Turpen, and Maude Long.

To develop the park, the County first hoped to include the area in a federally funded reforestation project, but anecdotal accounts indicate that park development may have actually been included in a project to rebuild the old county road. The roads which pass through the park were definitely built in 1934-35, and park development work seems to have been piggy-backed onto these civil works projects. This would account for the paucity of official project records and building plans for the park structures. In any case, newspaper accounts state that work through mid-1935 was completed under the auspices of the Civil Works Administration. C. Arthur Elliott, who replaced Melson as County Engineer in 1936, recalls that the project was finished under the auspices of the Public Works Administration and the Works Progress Administration, with PWA funds being used to purchase materials and equipment while the WPA paid workers' wages.

The park was dedicated on Sunday, May 12, 1935. Despite inclement weather, 500 people gathered around the new shelterhouse to listen to several speakers. Reporting on the event, the local newspaper editor noted that,

the massive rock wall along the river, the excellent highway at the foot of the bluff, the drive up to the shelter house, the fine timbered upland tract, all combined together to

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make this spot a thing of beauty. Its location, less than a mile from the site of the cabin of the first settler in Greene county, makes it all the more interesting as a spot to be preserved for future generations.

During the first few years of operation, a fulltime caretaker lived in a trailer located in the northeast corner of the park. After that, the County's secondary road department maintained the park until the Greene County Conservation Board was organized in 1958. At that time, the conservation board assumed responsibility for park maintenance.

### *Criterion C*

The stone buildings and structures located in Squirrel Hollow County Park are outstanding examples of Iowa's distinctive variation of Park Rustic architecture. Situated on a bluff overlooking the Raccoon River, the shelterhouse is particularly noteworthy. Its design reflects a plan found throughout Iowa's parks. Good (1938) described the partially enclosed plan used here as the "master shelter" design of the Iowa State Board of Conservation. Similar shelterhouses were built at Springbrook State Park, Backbone State Park, and Swan Lake State Park. The siting of the latrines is also noteworthy. For hygienic reasons, they of course were placed at some distance from the shelterhouse. Set into hill slopes and nestled among trees and ground cover, they are partially screened from view, affording users a degree of privacy and, more important from a design standpoint, intruding minimally on the landscape. In terms of design and siting, these three buildings especially embody classic Park Rustic aesthetic principles.

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### *Section 9: Bibliography*

Elliott, C. Arthur. Retired Greene County Engineer. Telephone conversation with Rebecca Conard, January 10, 1991.

Ennis, J. Harold. The County Conservation Program in Iowa." *Iowa Academy of Science* 69 (1962):219-223.

Good, Albert H. *Park and Recreation Structures, Part II: Recreational and Cultural Facilities*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1938.

Greene County Board of Supervisors. Minutes, June 13, 1933.

Hanson, William. Attorney, Jefferson, Iowa. Telephone conversation with Rebecca Conard, December 12, 1990.

Iowa State Planning Board. *The Second Report*. Submitted to the National Resources Board, Washington, D.C., April 1935.

### *Jefferson Bee*

"Squirrel Hollow to be Public Park," June 8, 1933

"Dedicate New Park," May 14, 1935

Stilwell, Arnold B. Details for Squirrel Hollow Park. Architectural drawing located in Fitzsimmons' Collection, Iowa State University College of Design.

Towers, Dan. County Conservationist, Greene County Conservation Board. Personal conversation with Rebecca Conard, January 7, 1991; follow-up telephone conversation March 15, 1991.

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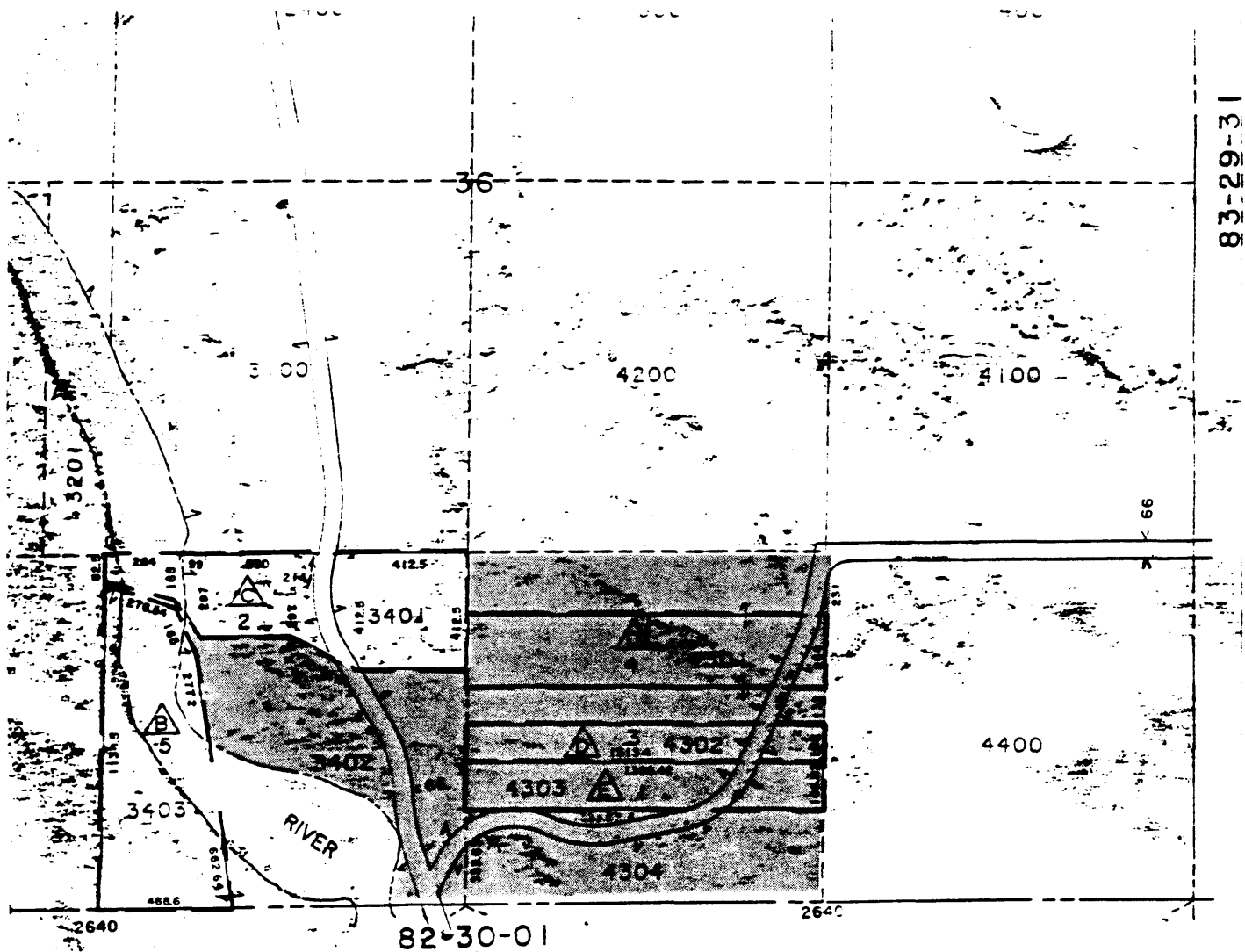
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## Section 10: Geographical Data

**Boundary Description:** Squirrel Hollow County Park comprises approximately 60 acres of land, including all of the southwest quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 36, T-83N, R-30W, and an irregular parcel in the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter bounded by and including the park road on the west edge.

**Boundary Justification:** These boundaries encompass the lands deeded to Greene County in 1933 and 1934 for county park purposes.



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## Section 10: Geographical Data

### UTM References

- A. 15 393110/4645225
- B. 15 393520/4645230
- C. 15 393510/4644820
- D. 15 393000/4644830
- E. 15 392960/4645140



**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Conservation  
Entertainment/Recreation  
Landscape Architecture

Period of Significance

1934-1942

Significant Dates

1934-1936

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Significant Person

n/a

Architect/Builder

Central Design Office, Iowa State College  
CWA, PWA, and WPA labor

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

**Specify repository:**

Iowa Bureau of Historic Preservation

**10. Geographical Data**

Acree of property approximately 60 acres

**UTM References**

A 

1-5											
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Rebecca Conard  
organization PHR Associates date June 20, 1991  
street & number 275 Crescent Park Dr. telephone 712/657-3347  
city or town Lake View state Iowa zip code 51450