

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 91000793 Date Listed:6/26/91

Washington Park La Porte IN
Property Name: County: State:

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patrick Andrews
Signature of the Keeper

7/17/91
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

The IN SHPO has clarified the resource count (item 3 and item 7, p.6). The contributing count is: 13 buildings, 3 sites, 11 structures, and 21 objects for a total of 48. The non-contributing count is 14 buildings, 3 structures, and 1 object, for a total of 18.

13 contributing buildings - former park headquarters, bandstand, tennis (picnic) shelter, tower, rotary (engineer's) castle, former animal hospital, former shop, primate house, 4 hoofed-animal shelters, and a frame hoof stock shelter.

11 contributing structures - stone retaining wall along main parking lot, picnic grove wall, tennis court, monkey island, small animal exhibit, feed barn, 3 walled walk systems, and 2 gateway entrances.

3 contributing sites - lay-out of the whole park, lay-out of zoo, and the rock garden.

21 contributing objects - WW I statue, Dickinson memorial, 6 scrap concrete benches, 10 cast iron lampposts, decorative rill, flower planter, and the Soldiers and Sailors monument.

14 non-contributing buildings - concession stand, former dodgem shelter, concession stand, garage-storage building, present park office, restroom building, maintenance barn, elephant house, zoo kitchen, petting barn, feline house, zoo concession stand, zoo

office, and the camel shelter.

3 non-contributing structures - eaglets exhibit, Jaycee amphitheater, and the amphitheater.

Non-contributing object - rotary club marker.

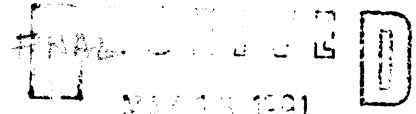
DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file

Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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 Washington Park

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number See continuation sheet

N/A not for publication

city, town Michigan City

N/A vicinity

state IN code IN

county LaPorte

code 091

zip code 46360

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>8</u>	<u>15</u>	buildings
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>16</u>	<u>2</u>	structures
<u>22</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>48</u>	<u>18</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

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.

Patrick R. Kato

Signature of certifying official

4-19-91
Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

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. 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:)

Patrick W. Andrews

6/26/91

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
RECREATION & CULTURE: outdoor recreation

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
RECREATION & CULTURE: outdoor recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: WPA Rustic
LATE 19th & Early 20th Century
Revivals: Tudor Revival
Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE
walls STONE
BRICK
roof ASPHALT
other OTHER: aggregate-and-mortar
stone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

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)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
SOCIAL HISTORY
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1891-1933
1933-1941

Significant Dates

1891
1911
1935

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Ahlgrim, Fred
Miles, Harry

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE 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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository:

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures
Inventory

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 112

UTM References

A

16	507580	4619240
Zone	Easting	Northing

C

16	508780	4618880
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B

16	508770	4619680
Zone	Easting	Northing

D

16	507780	4618730
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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

From entrance at Franklin Street, bounded on SW and W by Heisman Harbor Rd, NW by Browne Basin Road and the yacht basin and U.S. Coast Guard property, along the N by Lake Michigan, on the E by Fedder Drive (east) and Krueger Street, on the S by (east to west) the B&E Marina property, the Michigan City Water Works, and the U.S. government property that encompasses the armory. (all of these properties are on the north side of Trail Creek.)

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The district includes all the property traditionally belonging to Washington Park, and represents Pre-World War II boundaries. The small area that includes the Lighthouse Museum was not traditionally part of Washington Park. (The Michigan City Lighthouse has already been listed on the National Register in 1974.)

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Glory-June Greiff, Consultant to

organization Michigan City Zoological Society date August 1988

street & number 1753 South Talbott Street telephone 317-637-6163

city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46225

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

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 2 Page 1 Washington Park

Street and Number:

Roughly bounded by Lake Michigan, Krueger Street, Trail Creek,
Lakeshore Drive, Heisman Harbor Road, and Browne Basin Road.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 1

WASHINGTON PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Washington Park and Michigan City Zoo complex is located on approximately 112 acres along the shore of Lake Michigan, immediately north of downtown Michigan City. Just north across the Franklin Street bridge that spans Trail Creek is the main entrance to the park, where stands the 1896 Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument (Photo 1) with bronze relief sculptures depicting Civil War military men taking leave of their families. These sculptures circle the base of an obelisk, topped by a female liberty figure facing the lake (north), and inscribed "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori". Lake Shore Drive curves to the right (easterly) here, essentially paralleling the lakeshore. Except for a large main parking lot (asphalt-paved) and a concrete-and-aggregate promenade/seawall (Photo 7) on the western end, all the northern portion of the park is covered in dune grass and scrub. Parts of this dune grass area were once developed, and the numerous cottonwood trees that remain were planted by the WPA. Along the water's edge is a natural sand beach, a vestige of low lake levels.

South of Lakeshore Drive and just east of the entrance area after crossing the bridge is the former park headquarters building built in 1934 (Photo 2). Originally a greenhouse extended from its east side. The building is actually two separate gabled structures connected by a short gabled passageway. The larger, on the northeast, is T-gabled with a gabled entrance on the north, round arched window and door openings, with two small shed dormers on the west and metal casement windows. The southwesterly portion of the building is gabled with casement windows. The whole building (except the connection) is one-and-a-half stories, faced with limestone, with a slate roof. To the northeast of the entrance is a round stone-walled planting with a flagpole.

The area between the parking lot and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument (entrance) is what may be called the traditional park area. This greenspace is separated from the parking lot to the north by a low wall of large aggregate (concrete chunks, primarily) and mortar, and Browne Basin Road; it is bounded on the west by Heisman Harbor Road. The area is a large, somewhat formal greenspace with numerous large trees, flower plantings, several cast iron light standards along a curving sidewalk, a round, concrete-based frame bandstand with domed sheet metal roof built in 1911 (Photo 3), a bronze World War I doughboy on a granite base erected in 1926 (Photo 4), and an extensive WPA-constructed rock garden/water feature constructed mainly of red and grey granite rocks and mortar (Photos 5, 6). This last consists of water pumped through a small stone structure over a wooden waterwheel into a connected series of pools and channels, separated by flower urns and bridges, bordered with stone, with stone and concrete aggregate benches placed alongside at intervals. Until its demolition in the mid-1960s a peristyle stood between the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument and the bandstand, with flower-lined graveled walks connecting them.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2

WASHINGTON PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

East and northeast of the traditional park area is another space with similarly large trees, containing a one story concrete block concession building with a hipped roof, and a one story concrete block gabled building housing restroom facilities. Across Fedder Drive to the north was once an amusement park, closed in the late 1960s. The bumper car ride structure (ca. 1961) is the only evidence remaining that thrill rides were once part of Washington Park. No longer used except as a shelter, it is basically a rectangular open pavilion of frame construction, with gabled roof of galvanized metal and a raised metal floor surrounded by a wooden wall approximately four feet high. To the north is a large gabled open shelter on a cement slab, with a small stage area on the north, usually called the Jaycees' Amphitheater. Just east of it is a metal pole building with a shed roof, used as a garage. North of this a flat-roofed, two-story square building with flat-roofed wings houses the park offices and a senior citizens' center. It has a small parking lot of its own to the west and space for staff on the south. A small concession booth stands south of the west lot, with an "exaggerated modern" roof overhang (Photo 8).

Just northwest of the park office building is an intact picnic grove (without the original tables) surrounded by low walls about two feet high and two feet wide, constructed of irregular chunks of concrete and mortar (Photo 9). The corners of this enclosure are taller, with pyramidal caps, and are constructed of limestone chunks rather than concrete. Within the enclosure and continuing for several hundred feet to the east are the cottonwoods planted by the WPA. Along the south edge of this sand-and-scrubland is another low wall, partially buried by sand, of concrete chunks and mortar (Photo 10). South of it is an asphalt-paved court of recent vintage, intended as an ice skating rink.

A lane (Fedder Drive—west) and irregularly shaped parking lot separate the above area from what might be called a picnic and play area. This space is bounded on the north by incipient duneland with numerous old cottonwoods and on the south by Lakeshore Drive. The highlight of this area is the tennis court (ca. 1933), walled with chunks of stone and mortar, accented with four large pillars about nine feet high (Photo 11). Along its south side, placed along a hillside looking into the courts, are eleven (originally there were twelve) evenly spaced benches constructed of large chunks of concrete and mortar (Photo 12). Between them running up the hill in the center is a stone and mortar stairway. Near this point once stood a small ticket or concession booth of stone and mortar, demolished in the early 1980s.

At the top of the small hill, near the parking lot and reached from there by steps of old brick walled with random stones and mortar, is a rustic open picnic shelter completed ca. 1936 (Photo 13). It is constructed of rough logs, with a concrete slab floor in which a walk made of chunks of discarded hexagonal tile floor has been laid west to east. The roof is gabled (north-south) with gabled entrances west and east, and is presently covered with asphalt shingles.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 3 WASHINGTON PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

East of the picnic shelter is a rolling, wooded, grassy area in which stands a limestone obelisk (ca. 1970s) four feet high erected by Rotary International District 224, inscribed on its four sides with Indiana towns (Rotary chapters) in alphabetical order. Beneath this marker is buried a time capsule, although there is no inscription acknowledging this. Nearby is a concrete memorial consisting of a curved bench with a bronze plaque inscribed "W.J. Dickinson Memorial/Park Board Zoo Board/1928-1937" in front of which is a stone floor surrounding a large planting (Photo 14). It faces south so as to be seen from Lake Shore Drive.

Northeast of this monument (and immediately east of the tennis courts, up a grassy slope) is the "new" amphitheater (Photo 15) where the town band now performs over the summer. Of functional design, it is constructed of concrete, both block and formed. Directly northeast of the amphitheater is a metal pole barn used for storage of maintenance equipment. A small parking lot runs from here south along Fedder Drive to serve concertgoers.

East of Fedder Drive (middle) to the park's eastern border the terrain continues as rolling, wooded (mostly locusts, maples, and catalpa), and grassy, with picnic tables and playground equipment scattered throughout (Photo 17). At the intersection of middle Fedder Drive and Lake Shore Drive are two WPA-constructed stone and mortar pillars flanking the entrance (Photo 16). A similar pair marks the entrance where the lane along the park's boundary (Fedder Drive—east) meets Lake Shore Drive. Their pyramidal caps are composed of chunks of discarded hexagonal tile flooring. Along the north side of Lake Shore Drive are six WPA-constructed stone and concrete benches at intervals.

Due south of this picnic-and-play area is a large, wooded, basically stable (fourth stage) dune about two hundred feet high, separated from a similar dune to the west by an asphalt service drive constructed in the 1980s. At the crest of this second dune, and reached from the property to the west by three delightful winding paths of concrete steps and walks bordered by low rough stone walls with concrete benches inset randomly (Photo 18), is a four story observation tower constructed in 1936 (Photo 19). This building is basically symmetrical with its entrance on the north. The first floor window openings are still intact but are now filled in with concrete block for security's sake. There are three observation levels beyond the first floor; levels two and three have concrete balconies, open but caged with steel bars, on three sides (all except south). The window openings on these levels and up the concrete stairways are intact but now glassed in (plexiglas) rather than open. The fourth level, reached within by a steel spiral staircase, is entirely an observation post with virtually encumbered views in all directions. The building's design stems from its skeleton, a steel railroad tower erected on a concrete foundation. This was filled in with bricks, visible on the inside, and faced with limestone. A cornerstone, left of the entrance on the north facade, is inscribed "WPA/1936". The roof is flat and overhangs in an octagon shape. It is topped with a spherical ornament purported to be a compression chamber from the city's first fire engine.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 4 WASHINGTON PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

Down the dune to the west is the Michigan City Zoo, situated on about nine acres of hilly terrain, laced with winding walkways (many with low walls of aggregate and mortar) and numerous trees, surrounded by an eight-foot-high chain link fence. The zoo's northern boundary is Lake Shore Drive. Its entrance, today marked by a small clapboard-sided, gabled one-story building housing the zoo director's office and admissions, is at its northwest corner, where the park property meets that of the city's waterworks. (The original entrance—a wide stairway in a curving stone wall—is still visible south of the present entrance, but is blocked by a pole building constructed by the water company.) Just inside the entrance at the right (south), is a concession stand/gift shop (ca. 1960s) of similar construction to the zoo office.

From the entrance running east and paralleling its northern edge is a walk edged in places with the afore-mentioned low walls. On the left (north) is a small picnic space and two round metal cages, on the right is an animal exhibit space currently holding wallabies. Northeast of this is a large round planter constructed by the WPA (Photo 20). The concrete block feline house (Photo 21) east of the round cages is a noncontributing building of recent vintage (1977-78). Across from it to the south, however, are two animal holding areas from the WPA era, each with a small gabled brick shelter, open to the south, of English Cottage design (Photo 22). Across another walkway leading north are two more of these holding areas, each, again, with a cottage-type shelter (Photo 23). The four structures are alike in construction and size, but each has a different design in the brick. The walk between the two easternmost holding areas and two such areas to the north (these contain a small concrete block shelter and a low gabled frame shelter, respectively) leads to the tower on the dune, and here the chainlink fence surrounding the zoo has a gate to allow patrons to visit the tower during zoo hours.

Back to the walkway leading northerly toward the elephant house: on the west is a charming English Cottage brick structure built for feed storage (Photo 24). The clipped gable roof and gabled entrance have been reshingled. The 1977-78 elephant house is of poured concrete and a less obtrusive Post-modern design (Photo 25). East and upwards of it is the aviary, a roofed cage presently housing eagles. Southeast of the elephant enclosure and up a hill is an overgrown corner with steps and what appears to be a former well (marked "spring" on the 1938 blueprint). Along the southern boundary of the zoo property is an old walk that leads down toward the Engineer's Castle (now called the Rotary Castle). The castle building (Photo 28) is a three-dimensional replica of the Army Corps of Engineers insignia. Faced with random ashlar, it features crenellated parapets and four turrets. The original window openings are intact, but some are now filled with concrete block; the others have recently installed thermal windows. The false "second story" windows were constructed as filled in with stone.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 5

WASHINGTON PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

South of the castle is the monkey island (1933-34), a steel framework on a concrete base surrounded by a moat (Photo 29). Beneath the moat is a tunnel through which caretakers may reach the animals; the entrance to it and the water pumping equipment is housed in a little gabled structure of stone and mortar built into the side of the island complex. East of the monkey island, on the slope coming down from the aviary, is the "decorative rill" (Photo 30), a rock garden-waterfall-planting design feature (ca. 1934).

West of the monkey island are two small but notable WPA buildings. The former animal hospital (1935) is a one-story T-gabled building (Photo 32) with a gabled entrance, chimney on the west end, and metal casements, faced with random limestone. The roof has been reshingled. The former shop (Photo 33), built as a winter house for fowl (ca. 1937) is of NeoClassical influence, one-story, brick, with a chimney at each end of its gabled roof. It features a gabled entrance with returns, and has its original steel casements with stone sills.

Northwest of these buildings, along a walk leading north back to the entrance, is a flat-roofed, three-bay animal cage (Photo 34), constructed of random stone. A similar structure once stood just to the north, but the zoo kitchen, a small concrete block building with gabled roof, now occupies that space. Just across the walk to the east is a large metal pole barn with yard on the north, containing the petting zoo (Photo 35). East of the barnyard is the primate house (ca. 1930?), gabled, one-and-a-half story, with a clerestory now blocked. The building (Photo 36) is brick, and cages have been added along the sides.

RESOURCE COUNT

Since many of the park's features were difficult to classify and even to count, consistency was the cherished goal. For example, some of the WPA-constructed benches (classified as objects) are built into walled walkways and are therefore considered an element of that feature, as are those constructed along the tennis court (clearly for spectators) and the rock garden. Only if they stand alone were benches counted separately; there are six along Lakeshore Drive. Walled walkways were counted as one feature (structure) when continuous between connecting points most obviously visible on a map. For example, the three walkways leading up the dune to the east of the zoo all converge at the observation tower; they are counted as one structure.

In the zoo, constructions designed for human use or visitation are, of course, classified as buildings, such as the feline house, primate house, and zoo kitchen, whereas those constructions built strictly as animal shelters, such as the four WPA-built brick shelters for hoofed animals, are classified as structures. The rock garden in the west end of the park is a large multi-faceted construction with which visitors may interact (bridges, benches) and so is considered a structure. The

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 6 WASHINGTON PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

zoo's decorative rill, however, is smaller and strictly for visual delight, and is considered an object. The bandstand seemed to fall into the category of a building. As to sites, the park as a whole was considered, and divided into the traditional—and earliest developed park area—greenspace, the picnic-and-play area, the "natural" dune, and the zoo. The zoo is so distinctively a separate site it is also considered as one on its own and thus is counted.

Certain items because of their temporary, non-intrusive nature were not counted, such as playground equipment and small metal storage sheds with no foundations. The aviary—a large open shelter with no foundation—and two small open cages in the zoo were also not counted. Some of these are noted on the map for purposes of aiding the understanding of spatial and visual relationships among the resources in the park.

Given the above interpretations, Washington Park's resources include 23 buildings, 18 structures, 2 sites, and 23 objects, as follows:

Buildings

8 contributing: former park headquarters, bandstand, "tennis (picnic) shelter," tower, Rotary (Engineer's) Castle, former animal hospital, former shop, primate house

15 non-contributing: concession building, former Dodgem shelter, concession stand, Jaycee amphitheater, garage/storage building, present park office, restroom building, amphitheater, maintenance barn, elephant house, zoo kitchen, petting barn, feline house, zoo concession stand, zoo office

Structures

16 contributing: Soldiers & Sailors Monument, rock garden, stone retaining/decorative wall along main parking lot, picnic grove, tennis court, monkey island, small animal exhibit, 4 hoofed animal shelters (brick & stone), frame hoofstock shelter, feed barn, 3 walled walk systems (in zoo)

2 non-contributing: eagle exhibit, camel shelter

Sites

2 contributing: layout of whole park, zoo

Objects

22 contributing: World War I statue, Dickinson Memorial, 6 scrap concrete benches, 10 cast iron lamp posts in "traditional greenspace" area, 2 gateway entrances, decorative rill, flower planter

1 non-contributing: Rotary Club marker

While it may seem that the non-contributing buildings weigh heavily against the contributing ones, most are located in one area of the park, which had been the site of amusements and rides during the period of significance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page to replace third paragraph of page 6
WASHINGTON PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

NEW RESOURCE COUNT - PER PHONE CONVERSATION WITH PAT ANDRUS, 7/15/91

Buildings

13 contributing: former park headquarters, bandstand, tennis (picnic) shelter, tower, rotary (engineer's) castle, former animal hospital, former shop, primate house, 4 hoofed animal shelters, frame hoofstock shelter.

14 non-contributing: concession building, former dodgem shelter, concession stand, garage/storage building, present park office, restroom building, maintenance barn, elephant house, zoo kitchen, petting barn, feline house, zoo concession stand, zoo office, camel shelter.

Structures

11 contributing: stone retaining/decorative wall along main parking lot, picnic grove (wall), tennis court, monkey island, small animal exhibit, feed barn, 3 walled walk systems (in zoo), 2 gateway entrances.

3 non-contributing: eagle exhibit, Jaycee amphitheatre, amphitheatre.

Sites

3 contributing: layout of whole park, layout of zoo, rock garden.

0 non-contributing

Objects

21 contributing: WW I statue, Dickinson memorial, 6 scap concrete benches, 10 cast iron lamp posts in "traditional greenspace", decorative rill, flower planter, Soldiers and Sailors monument.

1 non-contributing: Rotary Club marker.

Number of Resources (as it should appear on cover sheet):

contributing	non-contributing	
13	14	buildings
3	0	sites
11	3	structures
21	1	objects
48	18	TOTAL

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1 WASHINGTON PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

Although Washington Park originated in 1891, and the Michigan City Zoo in the park had its modest beginnings in 1928, Washington Park as seen today is almost entirely a legacy of New Deal work programs of the 1930s. The park contains a comprehensive collection of structures and facilities typical of WPA (Works Progress Administration) recreational projects. Because of the variety of features and the imaginative landscaping, it is arguably the finest existing park in Indiana designed and built by the WPA and its predecessor agencies FERA (Federal Emergency Relief Administration) and CWA (Civil Works Administration). The Michigan City Zoo within Washington Park is the largest zoo in the state that was designed and executed under the New Deal programs. Much of the original landscaping and several of the animal shelter buildings remain intact, and the present zoo, while incorporating a number of modern zoological concepts, remains true to its 1930s character of a large variety of animals presented amidst an attractive, intimate, rustic setting.

CONTEXT—NEW DEAL WORK AGENCIES

In 1933, Indiana, along with the rest of the country, was in the midst of the demoralizing Great Depression. Before the hopeful eyes of the nation turned to President Roosevelt, who was inaugurated in March of that year, Hoosiers had turned the Statehouse over to their new governor Paul V. McNutt and a large Democrat majority in the Senate and House. McNutt had a lot of New Deal notions of his own, and immediately set up the Governor's Commission on Unemployment Relief (GUR), an umbrella agency that spewed forth various direct relief programs and rudimentary work programs. When Roosevelt took office shortly after and initiated the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the GUR in Indiana provided a handy framework which allowed federally funded relief and work programs to get underway quickly in the Hoosier state. Besides basic cleanup and fixup programs such as painting or building maintenance, jobs under FERA included some construction work, especially in the area of recreational facilities.

Putting men to work constructing recreational facilities filled a multitude of needs. First, the construction itself gave temporary employment. Then the finished park or community facility might itself provide employment for instructors or supervisors, and possibly for teachers, as well as offering training opportunities. The completed project then benefitted the community directly, providing a public facility for recreation in time of great need (with the enforced leisure time of unemployment), and a visible focal point of civic pride. A large percentage of New Deal employment projects in Indiana were in

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2

WASHINGTON PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

constructing and improving parks and recreational areas. At first under the somewhat limited auspices of FERA, later expanded under the temporary CWA (November 1933–March 1934) and then continued for a time under FERA again, such projects came to full fruition with the inauguration of the WPA in the summer of 1935. Indiana, with its New Deal governor firmly in control, was the first state in the nation to get its WPA program fully underway, and boasts a rich extant architectural legacy to support the notion that Hoosiers throughout the state enjoyed the many fruits of this comprehensive program. Among these are hundreds of parks and recreational centers. Other parks in Indiana may contain single examples of specific WPA structures that surpass one in Washington Park; for example, the rock garden/fountain in Mishawaka's Battell Park is even more fanciful and involved than that in Michigan City. But nowhere in the state is found such a comprehensive and representative collection of WPA-designed and -built leisure facilities for the public as in Michigan City's Washington Park. Some zoos throughout the state were improved by WPA work projects, and many monkey islands and duck ponds were constructed in city parks. Washington Park's zoo, however, appears to be the only one in the state completely designed and landscaped by the WPA.

WPA architecture, at least in Indiana, tended toward a number of design concepts: moderate versions of contemporary styles, the purely functional, or variations on a rustic theme, especially in parks. Much depended on what was available with which to build. Because of the nature of WPA funding—ninety percent of the federal money must be earmarked for payment of wages—local project sponsors with minimal budgets were forced to search for building materials wherever they might be found close at hand. In addition to whatever likely native substance that was lying about, WPA builders creatively used much material previously considered waste. Probably more than in any other project in the state, the WPA used found material, castoffs, and recycled bricks and stone to construct most of the features in Washington Park. Buildings and structures in the zoo exhibit several styles amidst naturalistic landscaping, with attractive variants of the English Cottage as well as an unusual three-dimensional interpretation of the Army Corps of Engineers castle insignia.

Washington Park, 1891–1933

The shore of a Great Lake seems an obvious location for a public park, but there was much objection and great controversy leading to the eventual designation of Washington Park along Lake Michigan north of downtown Michigan City in 1891. The present

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3 WASHINGTON PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

park had been the site of the town's lumber industry in the mid-nineteenth century. After that played out, the area became a shantytown amidst the drying nets of fishermen for several decades. Beyond that were, for the most part, miles of undeveloped dunes. Mayor M. T. Krueger's successful insistence on establishing a public park on the lakeshore did not endear him to his constituents, apparently, for he lost his bid for re-election. At the time of the park's founding, the famous dune Hoosier Slide still stood, a vast mound of sand over 200 feet high, west of the park across Trail Creek. (By the 1920s that dune had been mined into nonexistence.) The Hoosier Slide had been the destination point for numerous excursion boats in the late nineteenth century; with the establishment of Washington Park, such pleasure jaunts rapidly increased, and the area became a favorite playground for company picnics out of Chicago.

The Soldiers' and Sailors' monument at the park's entrance was presented to the park by benefactor John H. Winterbotham in 1896 as a memorial to Civil War veterans. New York sculptor J. Scott Harley fashioned the bronze relief figures of soldiers' families in attitudes of leavetaking. Nearby a peristyle and handshell were erected, donated to the park by industrialist John Barker (whose mansion in town was listed in the NRHP in 1975). During the seventy-odd years of its existence, the peristyle was rebuilt and rehabilitated before falling into disrepair and disuse, but it was finally demolished in the late 1960s. Barker's handshell burned, and was replaced in 1911 by a circular bandstand on the same site designed by city engineer Harry H. Miles. It still stands northeast of the Soldiers' and Sailors Monument and was rehabilitated in 1976.

In 1913 the city contracted with the South Shore Amusement Company to operate a dance floor and skating rink, soon joined by a bath house facility and a narrow gauge steam train. Most of this development occurred north and east of the entrance area. During the next decade or so, the amusements were expanded to include such facilities as a boat livery with a long pier extending into the lake, and several concessions and thrill rides. Many of these continued to exist into the 1960s, but all vestiges of the amusement park, with the exception of the Dodgem shelter (sans its electric cars) are gone today.

During the first few decades of this century, the city's fire department had taken on the responsibilities of an animal shelter, giving care and a home to dozens of injured wild creatures or unwanted exotic pets. People began to visit this hodgepodge menagerie housed behind the fire station. When a traveling circus left the firemen with a sick trained bear, they cried "enough!" and the animals were moved to cages in Washington Park in 1928. At that time a Zoo Board was appointed by the city, and food and funds were solicited from local businesses and the public.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 4 WASHINGTON PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

When the Great Depression hit, Washington Park consisted of a fairly typical greenspace around the entrance area with bandstand and peristyle, several commercial amusements, a motley incipient zoo, and, of course, the lakefront with its natural beach. All else was duneland or scrub. Extending northeast beyond the park were such lakeside cottage communities as Long Beach and Sheridan Beach, which had begun to boom in the 1920s. South and west of Trail Creek was an industrial belt and harbor area. With the economic downturn of the Depression, development of the park had virtually ceased just at a time when new public recreational facilities were most needed. A newly organized Park Board was created in 1930; with the help of private donations, some animal shelters were constructed for the zoo around that time. (Evidence suggests that the still-extant, although altered, primate house was one of these; if so, it is the only one standing.) The stage was set for the entrance of the New Deal.

Washington Park, 1933-1940

Among the first projects of FERA in Washington Park was the monkey island, a much-needed facility since primates in abundance were in the animal collection inherited from the fire department. Begun in late 1933 and completed the following year, the monkey island was, for its time, a most imaginative structure (built of recycled materials) and represented the most contemporary ideas of zoo presentation. It stands intact today, as do the attractive brick shelters for hoofed animals on the northeast side of the zoo. Previously these creatures had been contained in pens of chicken wire and sheltered in frame shacks.

Another major building begun and completed under FERA is the former park administration building near the entrance to Washington Park, which replaced a ramshackle frame house and outbuildings that had been serving that function. Sans its attached greenhouse, it, too, still stands, although presently it is not used. The architect on this and most of the other buildings in the park and zoo was Fred H. Ahlgrim, a local architect and prominent Republican. Some of the park's creative landscaping using recycled materials (chiefly waste stone and broken concrete) was begun at this time, including the delightful rock garden with its "rustic" waterwheel and connected pools, all walled with granite rocks and mortar. Work was begun on the tennis courts in 1933, which involved first moving a small dune piled on the desired location. 1934 saw the start of the picnic shelter house south of the tennis courts, and the erection atop a two-hundred-foot dune of the steel structure, donated by the South Shore and South Bend Railroad, that was to be the framework of the park's most outstanding feature, the eighty-foot-high observation tower. Work on this building and landscaping of the dune on which it sits was completed by the WPA, and the tower was officially dedicated in the spring of 1937.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 5 WASHINGTON PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

With the establishment of the WPA in 1935, work on Washington Park and its zoo was virtually continuous through 1940. A number of blueprints of park plans were drawn up and brought to fruition by the late 1930s. An examination of the 1938 plan maps reveals that nearly everything built by the WPA remains. Due to expansion of the adjacent waterworks, the zoo's main entrance has been moved from the west to its present location on the northwest, and a number of new structures were added in the 1960s and 70s (the most intrusive being the feline house and the petting barn), which did not change the essential character of the zoo. Much of the later 1930s WPA work in Washington Park focused on landscape elements and tree planting, the vision of which has only come to its full realization in recent years. Other than loss through natural processes, the legacy lives on.

For nearly one hundred years Washington Park has been Michigan City's dominant playground, fulfilling the role as demanded by change over time. The grassy, wooded entrance area of Washington Park remains today not so very different from its original Arcadian ideal, and the overall visual identity of the park and zoo is still firmly in line with the concept envisioned and developed in the 1930s by New Deal work programs.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1 WASHINGTON PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

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Map, Washin[g]ton Park drawn by Henry K. Fox. W.P.A. Project No. 1-7561. 30 August 1938.

Map, Washington Park, Michigan City, Ind. drawn by Henry K. Fox. Ca. 1937.

Map, Washington-Park Zoo, Michigan City, Ind. drawn by H.K. Fox. W.P.A. Project 1-7561. 1938.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1 Washington Park

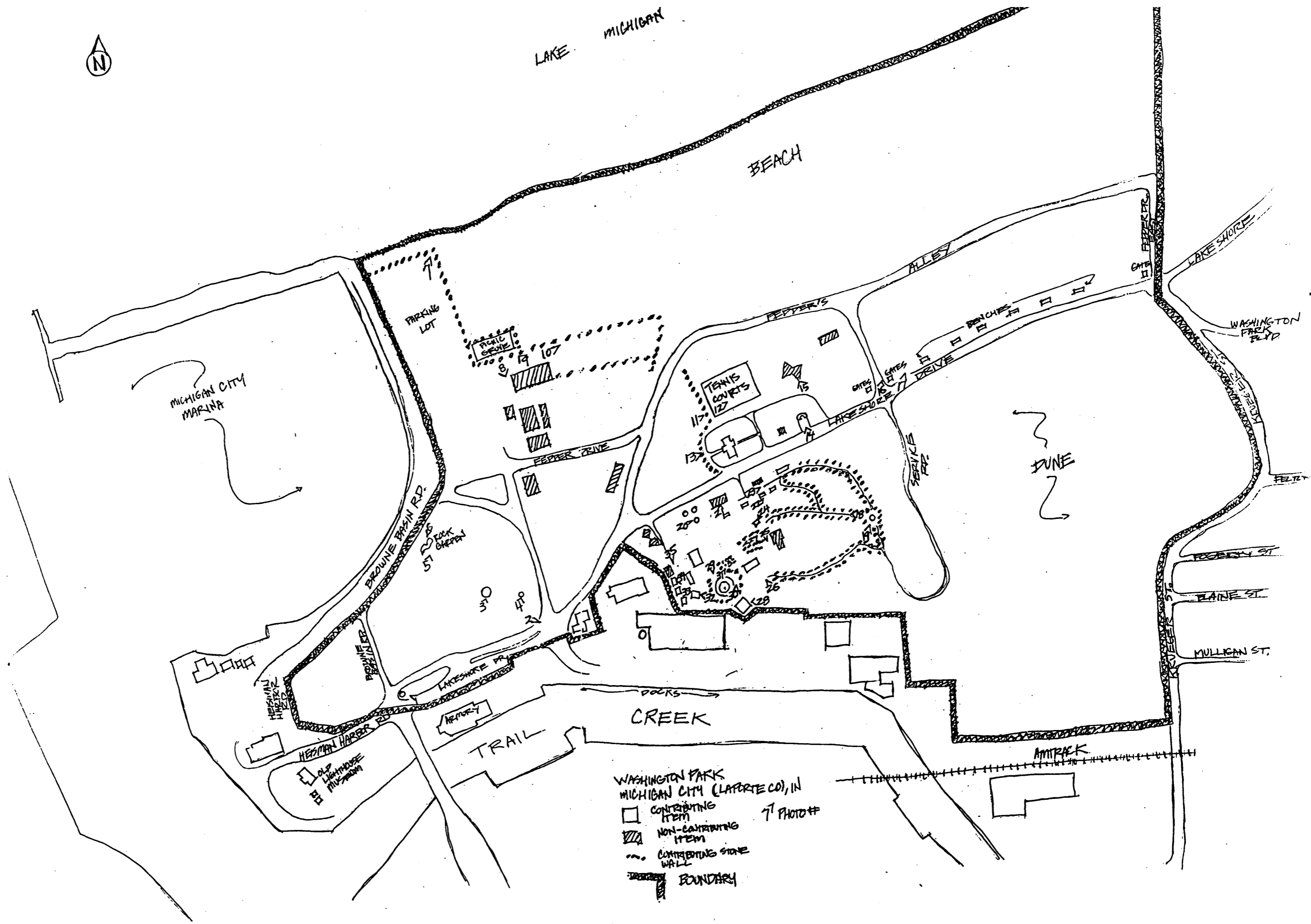
Boundary Description, Continued:

Precise boundaries are shown on attached sketch maps.



LAKE MICHIGAN

BEACH



WASHINGTON PARK
 MICHIGAN CITY (LAPOORTE CO), IN

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