

# United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and ~~and~~ <sup>areas of</sup> 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 Moraine Park Museum and Amphitheater (additional documentation)

other names/site number Moraine Lodge/ Moraine Lodge Museum/ Moraine Park Visitor Center/ 5LR.477

## 2. Location

street & number Rocky Mountain National Park (ROMO) [N/A] not for publication

city or town Estes Park [X] vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Larimer code 069 zip code 80517

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

*Janet Snyder Matthews* NPS FPO 5/2/2005  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
National Park Service  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

*Barbara Corteguzia* State Historic Preservation Officer 3/22/05  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register  
[ ] See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the  
National Register  
[ ] See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the  
National Register.
- removed from the  
National Register
- other, explain  
[ ] See continuation sheet.

*Edson H. Beall* Signature of the Keeper 6/15/05 Date of Action

Moraine Park Museum and Amphitheater  
Name of Property

Larimer County/ Colorado  
County/State

### 5. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

#### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

#### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing                      Noncontributing

<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>7</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>8</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

#### Name of related multiple property listing.

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

Rocky Mountain National Park MPS  
Historic Park Landscapes in National & State Parks  
MPS

#### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

1

### 6. Function or Use

#### Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT  
LANDSCAPE/ park  
RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor  
recreation/ museum/ music facility

#### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT  
RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor  
recreation/ museum

### 7. Description

#### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/ NPS rustic  
OTHER/ naturalistic

#### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/ granite  
walls WOOD/ log  
roof WOOD/ shingle  
other ASPHALT  
STONE

#### Narrative Description

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

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

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

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

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

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- POLITICS/ GOVERNMENT
- LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
- ENTERTAINMENT/ RECREATION

**Periods of Significance**

1923-1955

**Significant Dates**

- 1923
- 1931
- 1936

**Significant Person(s)**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

- NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (NPS)
- CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS (CCC)

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Colorado Historical Society  
Rocky Mountain National Park

Moraine Park Museum and Amphitheater  
Name of Property

Larimer County/ Colorado  
County/State

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 17.7

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1.	13	450300	4467665	5.	13	450450	4467295
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2.	13	450535	4467655	6.	13	450245	4467570
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
3.	13	450610	4467490				
	Zone	Easting	Northing				
4.	13	450490	4467410				
	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 Cheri Yost, Park Ranger (Edited- C. Geddes, staff)  
organization Rocky Mountain National Park date March 14, 2005  
street & number 1000 U.S. Highway 36 telephone (970) 586-1394  
city or town Estes Park state Colorado zip code 80517

## 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 Rocky Mountain National Park, U.S. Department of the Interior  
street & number 1000 U.S. Highway 36 telephone (970) 586-1200  
city or town Estes Park state Colorado zip code 80517

**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.

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

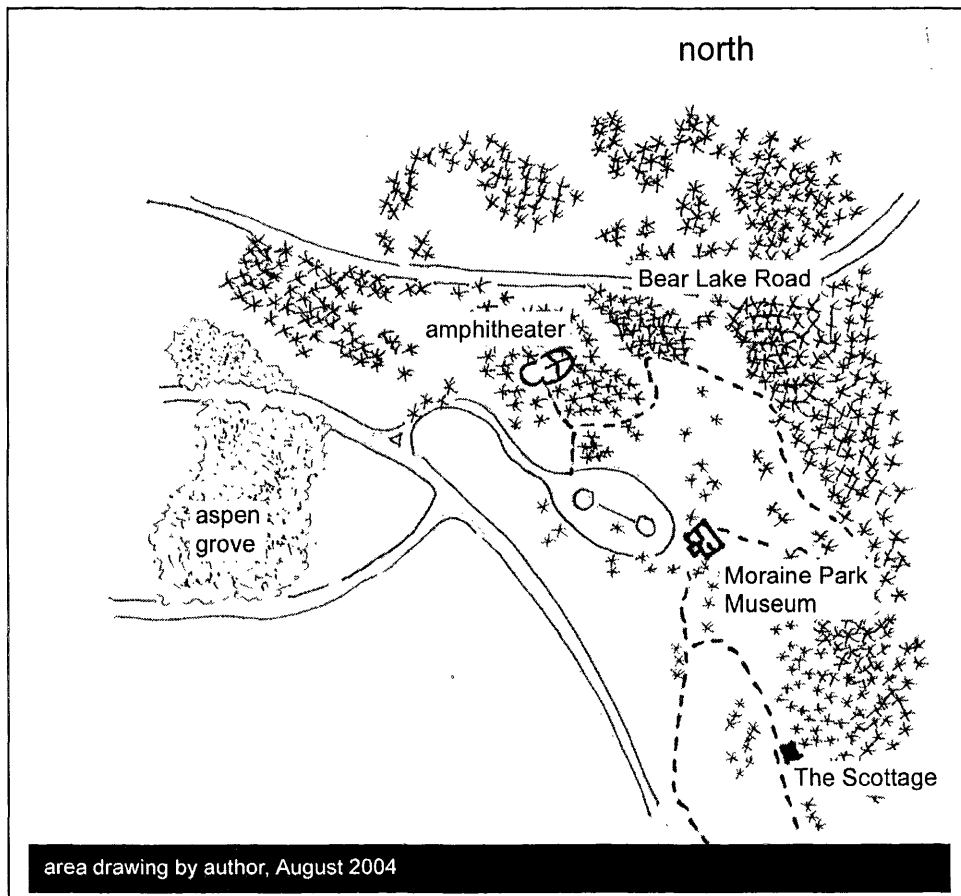
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Moraine Park Museum and Amphitheater  
Larimer County/ Colorado

Section number 7 Page 1  
Rocky Mountain National Park MPS  
Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks MPS

## DESCRIPTION

Within the boundary of Rocky Mountain National Park, this property sits in the northeast corner of Moraine Park, at the base of Eagle Cliff Mountain. The property can be accessed from Bear Lake Road, a little over one mile from the Rocky Mountain National Park Administration Building, (also known as Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, 5LR9947) on US Highway 36. It sits at an elevation of roughly 8100 feet. It affords spectacular views to the west of Moraine Park, a meadow of grass and shrubs that is surrounded by towering glaciated peaks and through which meanders the Big Thompson River. Views of Longs Peak dominate the setting amidst native upland shrub vegetation including ponderosa pines, gooseberry, bitter brush, common juniper, and native grasses. A privately owned cabin, called The Scottage, sits to the south of the museum. Beyond that lies the William Allen White National Register Historic District (5LR479), the summer residence of the Pulitzer Prize-winning author. Important built features include the Moraine Park Museum; the amphitheater including plank and stone seating, drainage structures, the foundation of the screen, and fire pit; pedestrian circulation system including stone steps and trails; and the entry road and parking lot, including stone culverts. Important natural features include the curtain wall of pines surrounding the stage area; the ponderosa pine tree marking the intersection of the entry trails; the ponderosa pine tree within the seating area of the amphitheater; and the views of the valley and Longs Peak.



# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

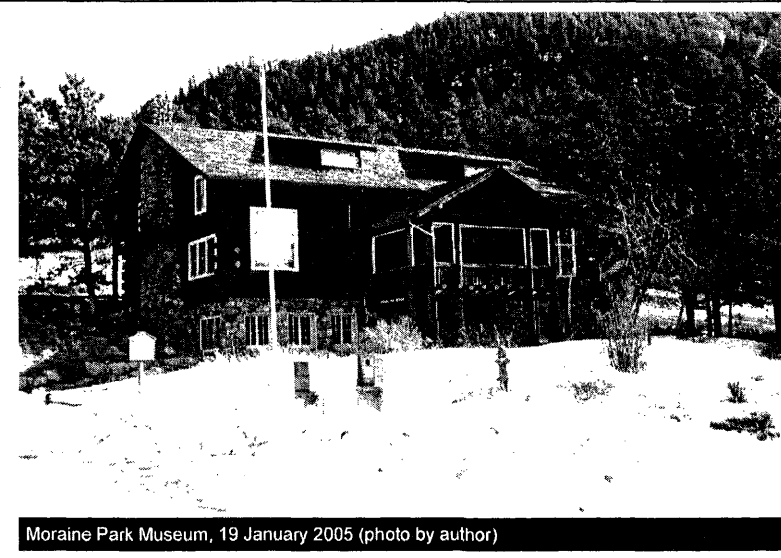
# United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

Moraine Park Museum and Amphitheater  
Larimer County/ Colorado

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## Museum Building

The Moraine Park Museum is the only building in the district. Visitors approach the building from the west, following the historic path, which breaks the mass of the building into smaller pieces. Thus, although a large building (approximately 5000 square feet), the overall impression is of a Rustic cabin tucked into the hillside.



Moraine Park Museum, 19 January 2005 (photo by author)

The two-and-a-half story building faces southwest and has a side-gable roof with two shed dormers. The entire roof is covered in green-painted wood shingles that double every fifth course. The upper stories are of log construction, with log sizes ranging from 7 to 11 inches in diameter. The corners are not notched. The upper stories are painted dark brown.

The front or southwest elevation is two-and-a-half stories in two parts: the original building and, to the southeast, a 1991 addition. True divided-light, wood sash windows punctuate this elevation

in a symmetrical fashion. The windows on the upper stories are double-hung, while the first story contains casements. A two-story, front-gabled porch extends from the front of the building. The second story of the porch has large picture windows; the lower story is open for access to the front door. The upper part of the front door has one light; it is constructed of multiple layers of wood boards with tongue-and-groove joints, painted dark brown. The basement story, partially excavated into the hillside, is concrete veneered in uncoursed fieldstone. On the 1991 addition, there are 1-over-1 wood sash windows on both the first and second stories. A dark-brown painted steel door provides access to the first story of the addition. The first story of the addition is poured concrete, painted dark brown.

Centered on the west elevation and extending through the roof is a prominent, uncoursed stone chimney. A log balustrade porch surrounds the fieldstone chimney on the second story and is accessed through two tongue-and-groove doors.

The northeast elevation is one story due to the slope of the ground and has four 12/12 true divided-light hopper windows. There is one 6/6 hopper window to the west end. At the foundation, a concrete gutter/swale moves water to a steel drain grate.

The southeast elevation is dominated by a 1991 addition to the building. It has a hipped roof covered in green-painted wood shingles. Brown-painted, clapboard siding covers the addition, which sits on a dark-brown-painted poured-concrete foundation. The paired exterior doors are steel, painted dark brown.

## *Alterations to Museum Building*

Originally a first-floor kitchen and tea room with second floor dance hall, the building has served as a museum since 1936. There have been four major alterations since that time.

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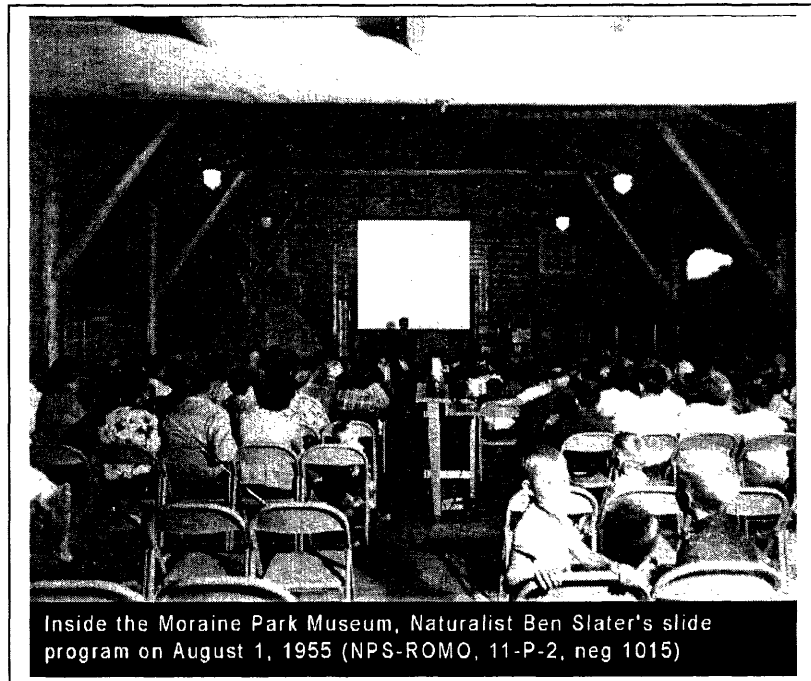
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Between 1936-1937, the park turned the former assembly hall into a museum. Originally across the front elevation there was an open porch atop a porte-cochere with a set of stairs descending from the porch on each side. The National Park Service enclosed this porch during the 1936 remodel with smaller, single-light sash windows. At an unknown date, the National Park Service replaced these with picture windows. On the west elevation, the National Park Service moved the first-story door a few feet southwest, to an existing window opening, and altered the original gable roof entry hood to a shed roof. On the southeast elevation, there was originally a small wing containing the kitchen, clad in shingles on the second floor and roofing paper on the first floor. The 1936 remodel changed the addition's exterior to a more compatible log veneer on the second floor and stone veneer on the first floor. Interior work during this remodel included placing exhibit cases against the exterior walls of the second floor and installing a large "Indian Exhibit" in the center of the room. The old kitchen became an exhibit space for a "Trapper's Cabin."

In 1941, the park remodeled the museum. On the northwest elevation on the porch surrounding the chimney, the National Park Service added an exterior stairway and a second door. Also on the northwest elevation first story, the National Park Service removed the shed roof over the door altogether. Inside, the park removed the Indian Exhibit and changed the Trapper's Cabin to a stage, so that the remainder of the second floor could be used as an "indoor amphitheater" or lecture hall. On the first floor, the National Park Service installed casework for exhibits, which were moved from the Headquarters Museum (near Estes Park).



Inside the Moraine Park Museum, Naturalist Ben Slater's slide program on August 1, 1955 (NPS-ROMO, 11-P-2, neg 1015)

Around 1960, the park discontinued use of the lecture hall, and by 1970 expanded the museum by installing centrally located exhibits on the second floor. The 1978 lower-floor remodeling included upgrading the electrical system and plumbing fixtures to comply with current code, refinishing all exhibit cases and building some new ones, strengthening load bearing partitions, rebuilding the first floor fireplace, recarpeting the first floor, and reshingling the roof over the observation room (second story of the front porch).

In 1990-1992, the park rehabilitation included removing the original one-story kitchen wing/exhibit space/stage and building a two-story addition to house the elevator/lift shaft and accessible bathroom.

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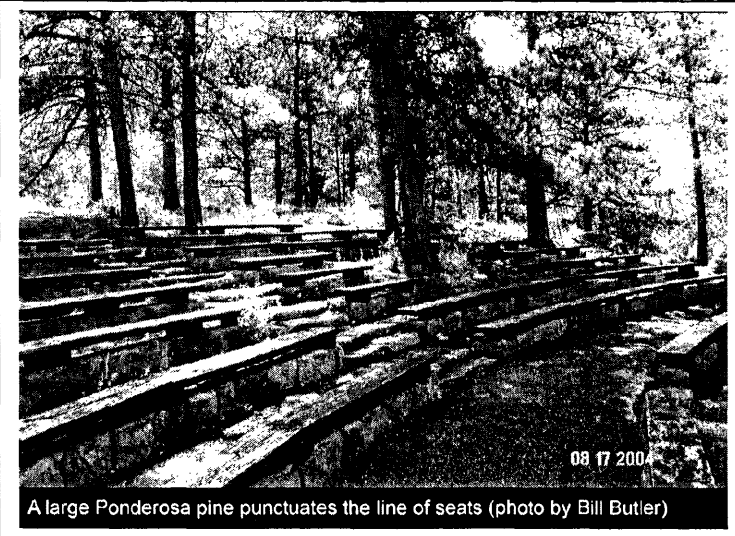
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The interior rehabilitation modernized the museum, shop, and lobby.<sup>1</sup>

## Amphitheater

Located about 100 feet northwest of the Museum lies the Moraine Park Amphitheater, an elliptical structure 125 feet long by 75 feet wide. The design maximizes the use of the bowl-shaped setting and native materials to carefully craft a space that blends with the environment, enhancing the naturalness of the site. The earth cut from the seating area of the amphitheater was likely used to create the terrace holding the stage.

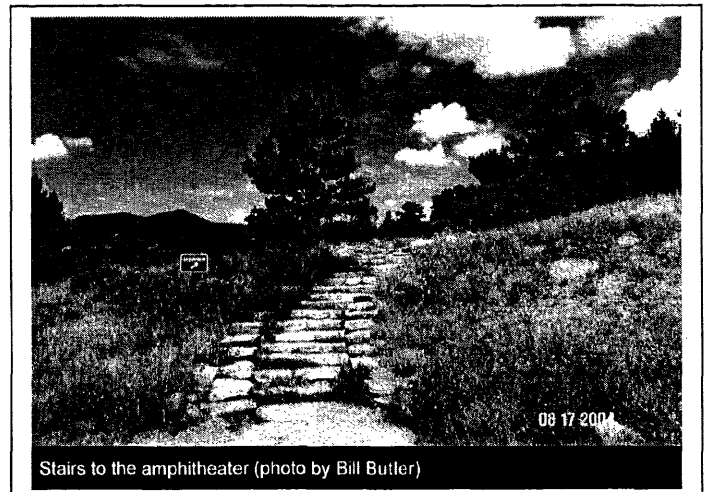


A large Ponderosa pine punctuates the line of seats (photo by Bill Butler)

The elliptical stage includes the remains of a stone fire ring and the projection screen. Two stone and concrete footers that held the log posts of the movie screen are present, but the actual wooden picture screen, on which the slides and movies were projected, no longer exists. Stones

that once defined the ring of the circular fire pit can still be seen in front of the screen foundation; a few large stones remain in situ, revealing their smooth surface on the floor of the stage. A curtain wall of ponderosa pines encloses the stage.

Sixteen rows of seats in two arcs ascend from the stage area, arranged in an irregular fan shape, facing the stage and fire pit. The seats sit on somewhat regular stones some 10" high. Concrete mortar stabilizes the rocks holding the rectangular seating planks. Timber wedges (11" x 4") lie on these stone walls about 4-5 feet apart, with rectangular planks of milled lumber (2¼" x 11" x 4-6") nailed to the wedges. The joinery between the planks as well as the wedges use large unfinished nails. The planks are painted dark brown. The seating between rows 10 and 13 in the right arc is broken to accommodate an existing tree in a rectangular planting bed. Lighting fixtures installed under the seats remain but no longer function.



Stairs to the amphitheater (photo by Bill Butler)

<sup>1</sup> National Park Service, Branch of Plans and Design, Measured Drawing of Moraine Lodge, Rocky Mountain National Park (Drawing RM-3062, February 1934); National Park Service, Branch of Plans and Design, Rocky Mountain National Park Moraine Lodge Museum (Drawing RM-3062A, September 1934); Completion Report, remodeling lower floor of Moraine Park Visitor Center (Work Order No. 1520-7109-404, 31 July 1978 (filed in historic building file at Rocky Mountain National Park)); N. MacMillan, Measured Drawings for Moraine Park Museum (Drawing 121-60313, December 1990); N. MacMillan and T. Windle, Renovation and Addition for Moraine Park Museum (Drawing 121-60266, July 1991); Julie Howe, Historic Structure Report, Moraine Lodge Assembly Hall (Denver: University of Colorado, College of Environmental Design, May 1992).



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Three main circulation paths with stone steps provide access to the seats. The aisle in the center is the most regular, about 4 feet wide. Those on the sides hug closely to the natural slope. Large stones and pines surround the northern corner of the seating area. The circulation path of the south side is defined by a line of pines.

### *Amphitheater alterations*

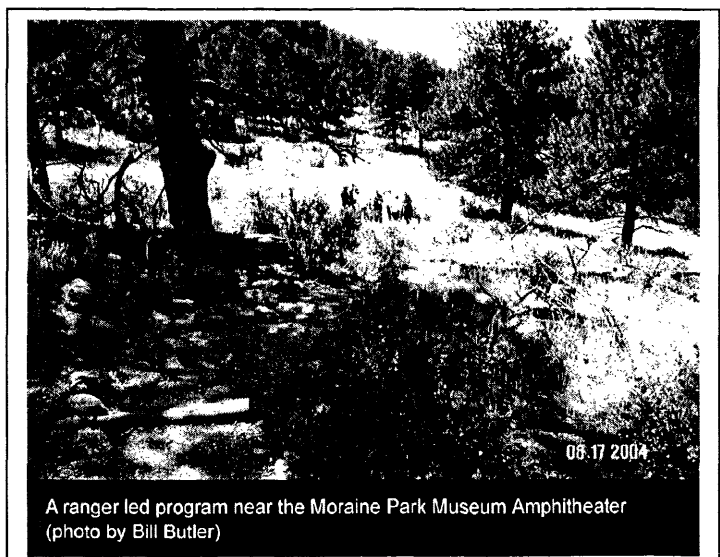
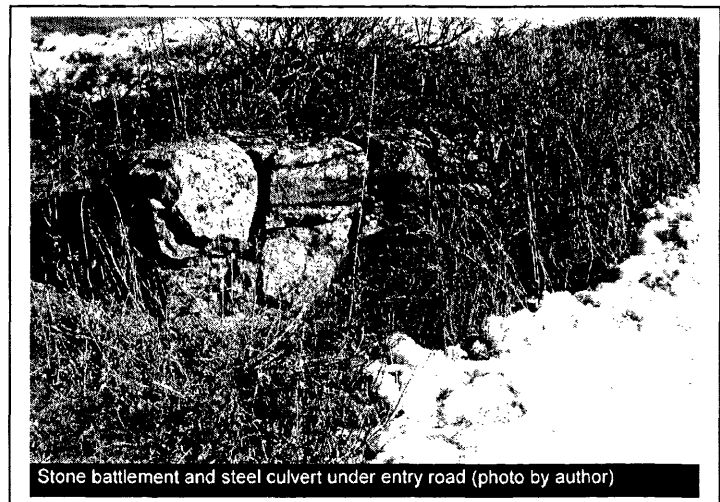
At an unknown time, the National Park Service removed the projection booth and screen. No major alterations or demolitions have occurred since its construction.

### Drainage Structures

Numerous stone drainage structures move water through the site. Drainage features include a 60-foot-long stone gutter above the amphitheater, which channels water into a drain. A steel drain grate lies behind the screen foundation at the edge of the stage area. At the bottom of the slope below the stage area, a 24-inch steel culvert with stone and concrete battlements channels water under the entry road. Down the slope from this culvert, lies another stone battlement and culvert that carries water under Bear Lake Road. To the southeast, a second system of matching stone battlements and steel culverts moves water under the roads. This drainage pattern points to the elaborate construction techniques used in the creation of the site.

### Trails

A network of earth footpaths, asphalt trails, and stone steps connect the amphitheater with the adjacent Moraine Park Museum. The primary trail to the amphitheater extends from the north end of the parking lot. This trail starts with a flight of 16 rough-hewn stone steps that have irregular treads measuring 14-16 inches and risers measuring 3-5 inches. The steps reach an asphalt trail 3-4 feet wide that heads north in the direction of the amphitheater. The grade is an average of 11% up to the amphitheater. It is possible that the original trail to the amphitheater may have been finished with irregular stones or an earth path lined with stones. On the northeast side of the parking lot, a log buck-and-rail fence runs from the museum to the amphitheater steps, following the interpretive trail. It prevents visitors from falling off the steep slope to the parking lot below. The interpretive trail is earth-packed, lined with rough stones, and marked with small, simple wood interpretive signs. The loop trail departs from the north and south sides of the



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Moraine Park Museum to meet the asphalt trail close to the edge of the stone amphitheater steps. This convergence is marked by a large pine tree surrounded by common chokecherry, with other shrubs and stones scattered in the landscape. From this point the asphalt trail to the amphitheater is lined by pine trees and gains elevation to arrive at the stage area of the amphitheater.

### Road and Parking Lot

The 20-foot-wide, asphalt entry road has a 15% grade and feeds into an asphalt parking lot that serves approximately 65 cars. The sign by the entry reads "Moraine Park Museum" and is constructed of log posts and 11" x 2-1/2" boards painted tan. The parking lot is paved in asphalt and lined with 8-12 inch diameter log curbs. A central island holds native shrubs, grasses, and one small ponderosa pine. Two, four-foot-tall steel bases that hold telescopes for interpretive programs sit on the east end of the island. On the south side of the parking lot, a 4-foot asphalt sidewalk lines the edge of the lot. Along this path, three modern, black steel wayside signs face Moraine Park and tell the story of some of the non-extant lodges, of the glacial history of Moraine Park, and of artists in the park (i.e. Albert Bierdstadt). Along this asphalt path near the museum lie two bear-proof garbage cans (one brown-painted and one green-painted); another brown-painted garbage can sits just outside the front door. Along the asphalt sidewalk to the museum's front door is a 15-inch-tall log "bumper" fence, made of 6-inch logs to prevent visitors from wandering off trail. The north side of this same asphalt sidewalk is lined with large granite boulders that both retain the slope above and serve as seating for visitors. This wall blends into a set of stone stairs that wrap around the fireplace and connect to the interpretive trail. A red fire hydrant stands in the grass near the front door. When the museum is open, the flag on the pole in front of the lodge constantly snaps in the wind. Two rustic, half-log benches allow visitors to admire the view of Longs Peak from the front door. Two small, wood signs teach visitors about native vegetation.

### Contributing Resource Count

#### Structures-

- Amphitheater (1)
- Trail system (1)
- Parking lot & road (2)
- Drainage system with culverts (3)

#### Site-

- Cultural landscape (1)



Moraine Museum parking area, May 4, 1936  
(NPS-ROMO, 11-G-3, album 4008, neg 3153)

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**SIGNIFICANCE**

In October 1976, the Keeper first entered Rocky Mountain National Park's Moraine Park Museum, also known as the Moraine Park Visitor Center (5LR.477, LCS 10503), in the National Register of Historic Places. That early nomination, by Ranger-Naturalist D. Ferrel Atkins, focused on the building itself and its association with the Moraine Park Lodge. The June 1987 Multiple Resource Nomination for Rocky Mountain National Park also noted the Moraine Park Museum for its representation of the Pioneer Settlement and the Development of the Resort Industry and its relation to the theme of NPS Rustic Architecture within Rocky Mountain National Park. This 2005 amendment adds other important features in the Moraine Park landscape, including the associated amphitheater. The Moraine Park Museum, amphitheater, drainage structures, trails, entry road, parking lot, and vegetation all contribute to a cultural landscape. Since the Museum is already listed in the National Register, the addition of these other features recognizes their historic relationship to the museum building.

The Moraine Park Museum and Amphitheater are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C, meeting the registration requirements set forth in the Rocky Mountain National Park Multiple Property Listing. Under Criterion A, the Moraine Park Museum building is eligible in the area of Entertainment/ Recreation for its association with the early resort industry and tourism in the Estes Park region, with a period of significance starting in 1923 and ending in 1931. Under Criterion A, the Moraine Park Museum and Amphitheater district is significant in the area of Politics/Government for the involvement of 1930s federal relief agencies, specifically the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Emergency Conservation Works (ECW), with a period of significance from 1936-1937. The district is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture; the design and relationship of the building and its associated structures reflect National Park Service (NPS) Naturalistic Design of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.

Additionally, the Moraine Park Museum and Amphitheater reflect the national trends described in Linda Flint McClelland's Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks Multiple Property Listing. In this second context, the Moraine Park Museum and Amphitheater are eligible under Criterion A, with a period of significance from 1936-1955, in the area of Entertainment/Recreation for its connection to the twentieth-century movement to develop national parks for public enjoyment, as well in the area of Politics/Government for the principles and practices of park landscape design used by the park in CCC projects. The Museum and Amphitheater are also eligible under Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture for a design that reflects NPS Naturalistic Design of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.

Since the 1870s, Moraine Park cast a spell over visiting tourists, many of whom remained and homesteaded its quiet meadows. One of these tourist-turned-landowners was Imogene Greene MacPherson. Between 1905 and 1923, she built the Moraine Lodge, a collection of rustic buildings that treated guests to the Rocky Mountain experience. Mother MacPherson had a reputation as a gracious and accommodating hostess. She was an advocate for the Rocky Mountain National Park, which Congress approved in 1915. After her death in 1928 and with the Great Depression of the 1930s, the number of guests declined rapidly. In 1931 the National Park Service bought the property from the MacPherson estate, quickly altering the property from a rustic resort to a modern visitor facility.

The site reflects an important period of National Park Service conservation philosophy--including naturalizing developed areas, building visitor facilities in a "naturalistic" design, and communicating a strong natural ethic to visitors--all focused on preserving the "wildness" of National Parks. To accomplish these goals in the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps obliterated most of the Moraine

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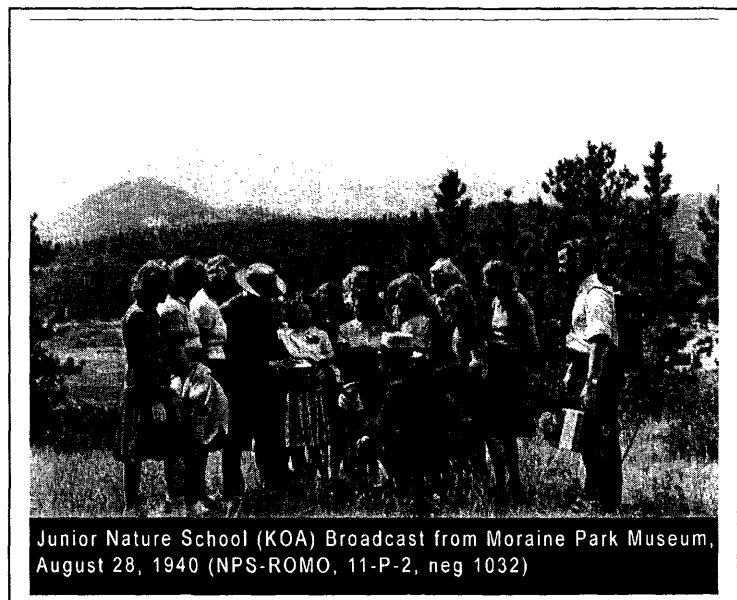
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Lodge, restoring the land to its "natural" state. By 1936, they converted the Moraine Lodge's Assembly Hall to a National Park Service museum and began to construct an amphitheater nearby. This amphitheater design followed then-prominent naturalistic principles of utilizing native plants and materials and the natural features of the bowl-shaped topography to construct a structure connected to its landscape. The strong association between the amphitheater and the newly converted museum reflected the National Park Service's evolving education and interpretation programs, which focused on formal presentations with cutting-edge technology of lantern slides. The date the park discontinued regularly scheduled amphitheater programs at the Moraine Park Museum is unknown. The amphitheater is currently used for weddings and K-12 education programs.

## Integrity

The Museum building is the last extant building from any of the numerous resorts that once dotted the landscape of Moraine Park. Its integrity as a "resort" building is questionable, considering that the feeling of the resort is gone and the other associated resort buildings were effectively obliterated. The National Park Service altered the design of the building in 1936, heavily modifying the character-defining feature, the grand staircase. The building does, however, have integrity of location, materials, workmanship, and setting amongst the ponderosa pines.



Junior Nature School (KOA) Broadcast from Moraine Park Museum, August 28, 1940 (NPS-ROMO, 11-P-2, neg 1032)

The Moraine Park Museum and Amphitheater as a whole retains essential features that convey its history after 1936 and therefore retains a high level of integrity. Because there have been few modifications to the district, it retains its integrity of location, design, form, material, setting, feeling, and association. Although the building has been altered, the major modification (enclosing the porch) happened during the period of significance. The modern addition is subservient to the original building because of its smaller scale, modern materials, and location opposite the entry road. It does not distract from the integrity of the building. The amphitheater has lost some minor architectural features--such as the projection booth and screen--but the loss does not diminish the overall design integrity. The fire pit can be excavated relatively easily and the screen and projection booth can be reconstructed, based on historical documentation without much difficulty. The overall form of the building, parking lot, and amphitheater has not changed. Although the trail tread has changed, the remaining materials of stone, concrete, and wood have remained the same. Trees have both died and sprouted, this reflects the natural succession in the ponderosa pine ecosystem (making things look "natural" was a goal of naturalistic design); therefore the setting has changed slightly as it was designed to change. The feeling of being in a rustic setting among the trees, looking at Longs Peak, remains. The essential association between the museum and amphitheater continue. Despite the loss of some historic materials and disrepair, largely due to minimal maintenance, the district retains a majority of the features that illustrate its historical significance.

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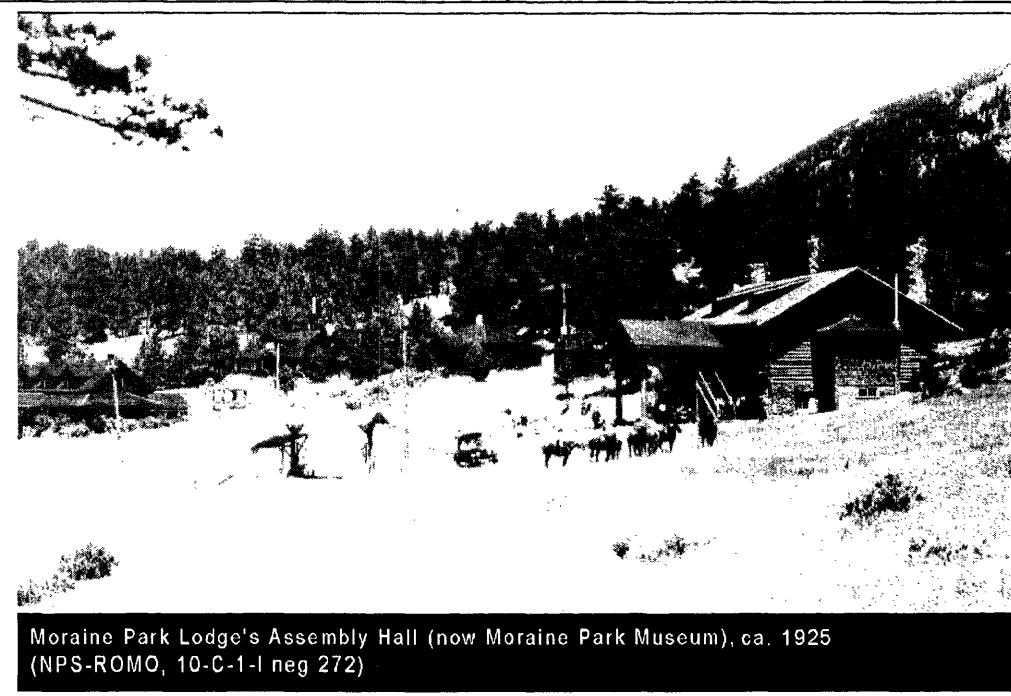
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## Historic Context

The cultural landscape of the Moraine Park Museum and Amphitheater is an important example of the growth of the local resort and tourism industry, of conservation efforts of Depression-era make-work programs and of the National Park Service, and of naturalistic design within the National Park Service. In 1898, a visit to Sprague Ranch inspired Imogene Greene to homestead a 160-acre parcel in Moraine Park, which already had a small cabin. After making some improvements, in 1903 she earned her patent on the land she called Hillcrest. In 1905, with her new husband, William D. MacPherson, a lumber dealer, she decided to expand her private retreat into a place others could enjoy. She built a lodge, a dining facility, a livery, and small guest cabins. By 1910, the first guests arrived at her Moraine Lodge. The resort grew rapidly and was advertised as "rustic and distinctive with modern improvements, private baths, good food-and-a-plenty, and our auto meets the four daily auto stages at Estes Park." Mother MacPherson had a reputation as a gracious and accommodating hostess. She also became an active member of the community, campaigning in her role as President of the Estes Park Women's Club with Enos Mills for the establishment of Rocky Mountain National Park. Although her husband died in 1919, MacPherson continued to run her resort. In 1921, it cost \$35 a week to stay in a "gas-lighted cabin with a shower and tub and telephone and telegraph service." In 1923, she built an Assembly and Recreation Hall, where guests could dance on the large upper floor and then rest by the fire in the lower Tea Room. On July 23, 1923, *The Estes Park Trail* boasted: "Very elaborate

ceremonies ushered the fine new rustic assembly hall just completed at Moraine Lodge into the center of the social activities of the popular resort." In 1928, following MacPherson's death at age 84, her family continued to run the resort. Between 1929 and 1931, they leased the Moraine Lodge to J. Russell McKelvey, who later ran the Fall River Lodge in Horseshoe Park. In the fall of 1931, amid the Great Depression, the National Park



Moraine Park Lodge's Assembly Hall (now Moraine Park Museum), ca. 1925  
(NPS-ROMO, 10-C-1-I neg 272)

Service purchased the property for \$30,125.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Henry F. Pederson, *Those Castles of Wood: The Story of Early Lodges of Rocky Mountain National Park and Pioneer Days of Estes Park, Colorado* (Estes Park, Colorado: privately published, 1993), 97-102; Jeffrey K. Malcomson, "Rocky Mountain National Park Non-Extant/Removed Structures Form: Moraine Lodge," (National Park Service, Intermountain Support Office - Denver, January 1998), 2; C.W. Buchholtz, *Rocky Mountain National Park: A History* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1983), 117; D. Ferrel Atkins, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination for the Moraine Lodge (United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1975); Historic American Building Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Moraine Lodge (Moraine Park Visitor Center): Photographs, Written Historical and Descriptive Data (National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Regional Office, HABS CO-78, COLO 35-ESPK.V3: no date).

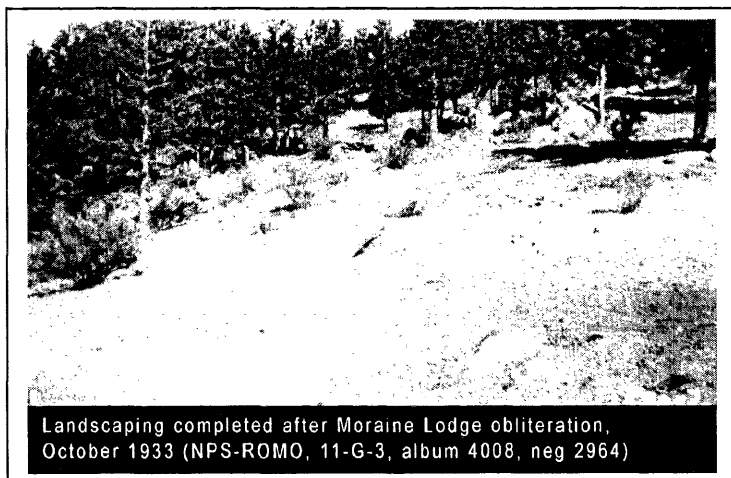
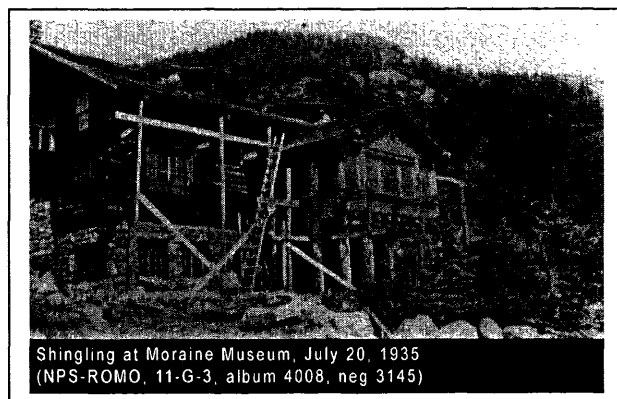
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During the 1930s, the National Park Service followed conservation philosophies that required the "naturalizing" of its western National Parks. Many management tasks focused on erasing all signs of human activity or building new visitor facilities that harmonized with the natural environment. These tasks were made possible because of New Deal make-work programs, including the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). In Rocky Mountain National Park, recruits helped out with a variety of tasks relating to construction of roads, trails, campgrounds, and buildings. They were also involved with conservation, maintenance, demolition, vegetation management, and general park improvements. In 1933, CCC members stayed at the Moraine Lodge but soon began to dismantle the complex. According to the Superintendent's Monthly Report of August 1933, "During the past month a crew of E.C.W. [Emergency Conservation Works] men have been wrecking several of the old buildings. All material of value will be salvaged, the remainder is being given to people in the surrounding county for firewood. When completed its obliteration will greatly improve the lower Moraine Park Valley." The next month's report stated: "The razing of the buildings at Moraine Lodge was finished and the crew was proceeding with filling up of the remaining excavations." In October the Superintendent reported the progress as follows: "Moraine Lodge Rehabilitation and Obliteration. This work was 98% complete at the close of the month. Twenty-seven buildings have been razed, the earth regraded to its original slope and some planting done. All good lumber has been salvaged and piled at the Utility site." These efforts to naturalize the landscape reflected the National Park Service's philosophy of conservation.<sup>3</sup>



In addition to naturalizing the park during the 1930s, the National Park Service developed a modern formal education and interpretation program, which reflected its conservation philosophy and required specialized facilities. In 1936, the E.C.W. crews remodeled the remaining building at the Moraine Lodge, the Assembly Hall, for use as a museum and began construction of an adjacent amphitheater. The Annual Report from Fiscal Year 1936 stated that the amphitheater "will be ready for use before the end of the summer."

<sup>3</sup> Buchholtz, 185; Superintendent's Monthly Reports August, September, and October 1933.



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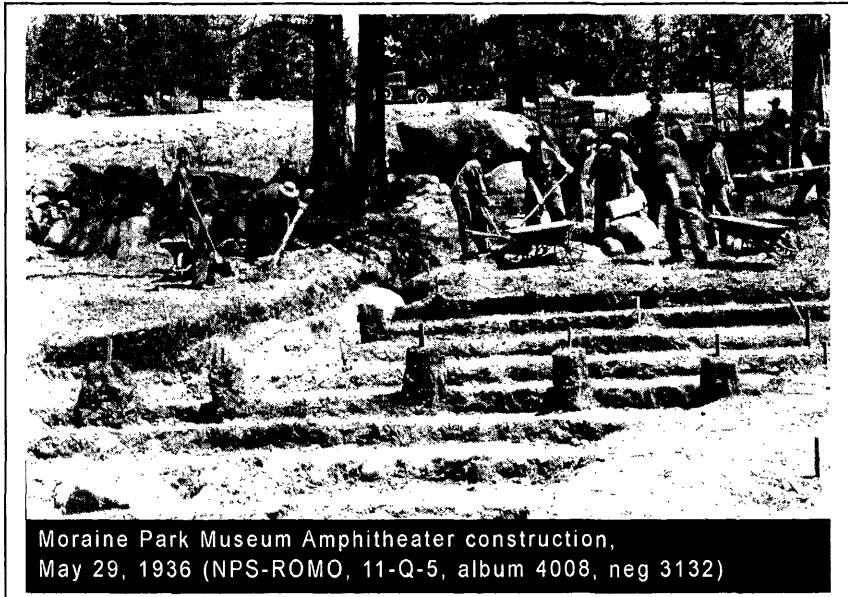
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However, construction on the site was still underway a year later, as is evident from the Superintendent's Monthly Report from May 1937: "In the Moraine Museum area the following E.C.W. construction is under way: the steps to the amphitheater, the trail to the amphitheater, the path to the museum, sodding slopes, surfacing the parking area, erosion control, and cementing of steps in amphitheater." The Superintendent's Monthly Report from June 1937 states that "The Moraine Park Amphitheater and parking area are fast rounding into shape and should be completed early next month. This job has been one of the largest that E.C.W. crews have been placed on, and has taken them a year to complete. The job called for many types of works, including log, rock, cement, grading and landscaping. When completed, it will be an excellent improvement to the park." The amphitheater was opened to the public on August 6, 1937, and "its first meeting drew 97 people, a very encouraging prospect for the new centralized lecture program."<sup>4</sup>

This combination of museum and amphitheater reflected the development of new approaches to visitor interpretation in the National Park Service. Early interpretive efforts focused on individual naturalists escorting small groups of visitors into the field. By the 1920s, as visits to the park increased, the National Park Service Education Division, under the leadership of chief naturalist Ansel F. Hall, began to create new methods for reaching visitors, including wayside exhibits, amphitheaters, and park museums. By holding interpretive



Moraine Park Museum Amphitheater construction,  
May 29, 1936 (NPS-ROMO, 11-Q-5, album 4008, neg 3132)

programs at amphitheaters, the park naturalists were able to reach large audiences and serve a greater number of people. In Rocky Mountain National Park, the recently remodeled museum and newly constructed amphitheater, linked together spatially by the parking lot and a short trail, played a joint role in educating park visitors on the natural history of the park. Although the amphitheater was the venue for most evening programs, in the event of "rain or cold, Moraine Amphitheater Lectures are held indoors at the Museum." Program titles included "Winter Scenes in Colored Movies" and "The Red Man in the Rockies." On April 22, 1938, *The Estes Park Trail* remarked: "Of importance to the naturalist program for the Park visitors was the construction of an amphitheater, seating 390 persons, near the Moraine Park Museum. Complete in every respect, it is equipped with a large moving picture screen, stage, lighting, projection booth, a fire pit for the comfort and comfortable wooden seats arranged in a semi circle on a slope to assure visibility for all visitors." Further, in 1937, the park itself noted, "The development of the new lecture center at Moraine Park Amphitheater has shown itself to be logical, in that attendance has been showing a steady figure of 75 to 100 when weather conditions are favorable. Rainy and cold evenings [reduce] crowds somewhat, but no lectures are postponed, rather being held inside the museum in improvised arrangements."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Superintendent's Annual Report, 1936; Superintendent's Monthly Report May 1937, June 1937, and July 1937.

<sup>5</sup> *Estes Park Trail*, 1 July 1 1938; (July 28, 1939); (July 1, 1938).

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The amphitheater's naturalistic design reflected the conservation efforts of the National Park Service during the 1930s when hand labor was readily available from the CCC. In the 1920s, the San Francisco design office of the National Park Service created a naturalistic style following the 19th century romantic landscape design tenets promoted by Frederick Law Olmsted and Andrew Jackson Downing. The basic tenets of this NPS naturalistic (or NPS Rustic) design was that architecture would play a subordinate role to nature, the massing of the structure would respond to the terrain, and the design would hide and blend with the naturalness of the setting. Although NPS standardized the design of new buildings in terms of floor plan and elevations, they did not standardize the materials and techniques of construction. Instead, the use of native material available in the vicinity of the site was encouraged, making stone and timber the materials of choice for most parks, including Rocky Mountain National Park. The National Park Service applied this naturalistic or rustic design to buildings, by having materials blend with their natural surroundings and reflect hand-tool construction. With wood shingle roofs, log framing, rough textures, stone foundations, and dark-stained siding, many buildings within Rocky Mountain National Park exemplify this design philosophy. Similarly in landscape architecture, built features like trails and amphitheaters were to play a subordinate role to the natural surroundings and use local materials.

The prototype for the National Park Service outdoor amphitheater is in Yosemite National Park. Typically called the "woodland amphitheater," the design was a rustic interpretation of the Greek amphitheater built into a hillside with seating radiating in semicircles from a center stage. The National Park Service's Albert Good, in his style manual of 1938, recommended two types of "open air assembly" sites: campfire circles, which were "elementary expressions...found in



many parks" and amphitheaters, found "in large parks appealing to more than local interest." For the amphitheater design, Good recommended "a distant view as background for a stage platform" or "a background of trees." He also noted that "the cutting of large trees existent within the limits of the seating of the amphitheater is to be avoided" and that "usually a campfire is built in front of the stage." The Moraine Park site represents one of the earliest, fully realized examples of this type of amphitheater design in the National Park Service. The Moraine Park Amphitheater's naturalistic design utilized the natural bowl site, retained and enhanced native plantings, used rustic materials such as wood and stone, included the fire circle, and focused the view across Moraine Park. In 1938, Rocky Mountain National Park built two, simpler lecture circles (Aspenglen Campground and Glacier Basin Campground both constructed in 1938) using cut logs for seats and the screen. Neither of these had the elaborate stone work found in the Moraine Park Museum Amphitheater's more formal design.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> According to the CCC records, the start dates for the features were as follows: amphitheater (project 476) stated April 25, "Truck Trail" to Moraine Park Museum (project 474) started August 7<sup>th</sup>, the parking area (project 475) started September 23 (they eventually moved 560 cubic yards of dirt for the parking lot). CCC Records (NARA DC, RE79, Entry 42, Box 11); National Park Service, Office of the Chief Engineer. Rocky Mountain National Park, Moraine Park Museum Area, Trail to Amphitheater (Drawing RM-5174, San Francisco: 8 July 1935); Albert Good, *Park and Recreation Structures* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1938), 171-187; Linda Flint McClelland, *Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the*



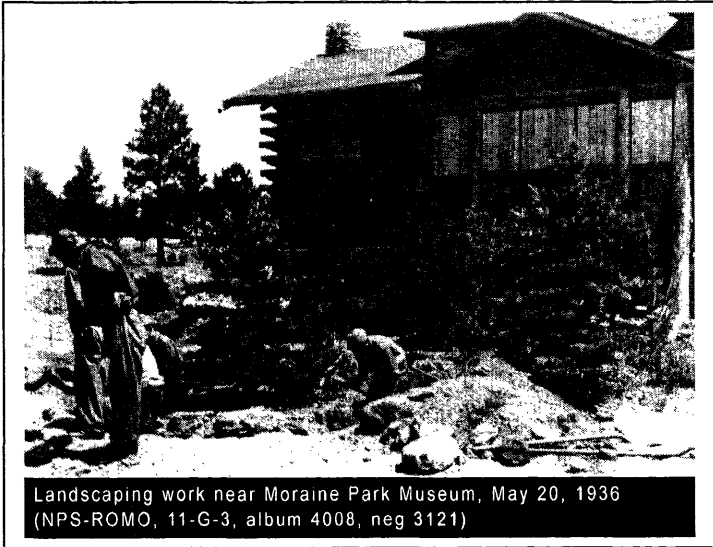
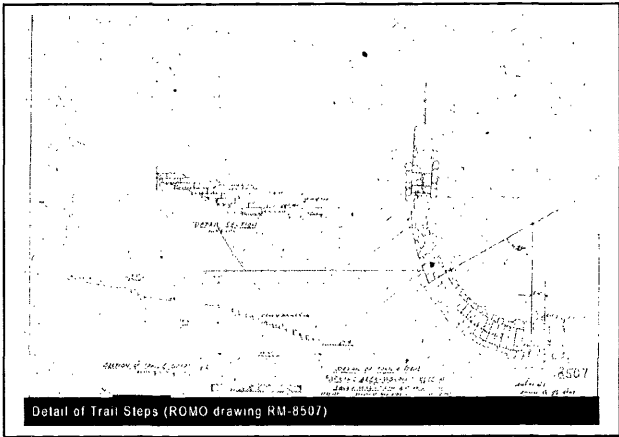
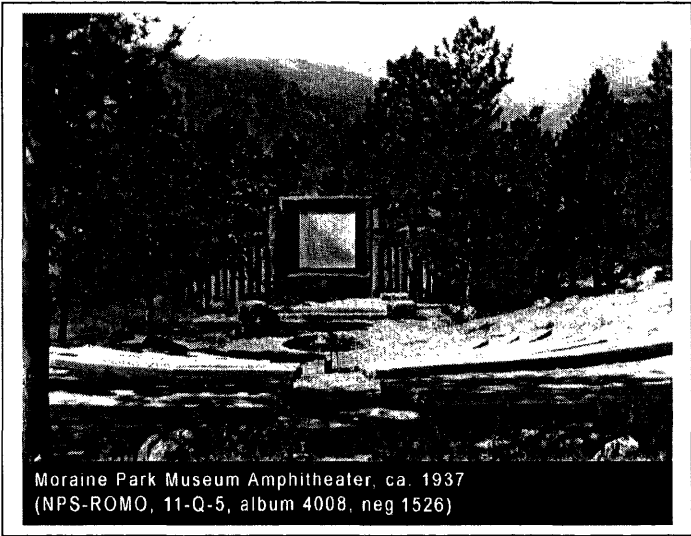
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As the last remaining extant building from the numerous lodges that once covered Moraine Park, the Moraine Park Museum represents the pre-park era of rustic resorts and lodges. The Moraine Park Museum and Amphitheater represent the New Deal conservation efforts of the CCC and the National Park Service and the post war evolution of the National Park Service's education programs. The Moraine Park Museum's evolution over time reflect the desire to satisfy visitor needs and constantly improve interpretation of the park's natural and cultural history. Since 1936, the amphitheater and landscape that surround it have remained largely unchanged, a testament to the timelessness of naturalistic design and the consistency of the National Park Service mission.



*National Park Service, 1916-1942* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division, National Register of Historic Places: 1993), 147; HABS drawings (CO-78, COLO 35-ESPK.V3, no date).

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## PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 00-24 except as noted:

Name of Property: Moraine Park Museum and Amphitheater  
Location: Larimer County/ Colorado  
Photographer: Cheria Yost  
Date of Photographs: January 19, 2005  
Negatives: Rocky Mountain National Park Museum Storage Facility

<u>Photo No.</u>	<u>Photographic Information</u>
------------------	---------------------------------

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 00) | View to west: Moraine Park (Forest Canyon) from parking lot                        |
| 01) | View to east: Moraine Park Museum  |
| 02) | View to southeast: trail to museum (above parking lot)                             |
| 03) | View to east: amphitheater from behind stage                                       |
| 04) | View to southwest: stage and fire ring   |
| 05) | View to south: drainage system above amphitheater                                  |
| 06) | View to north: detail of seats   |
| 07) | View to north: ponderosa among the seats   |
| 08) | View to east: steps and seats  |
| 09) | View to north: amphitheater from parking lot path                                  |
| 10) | View to north: detail of stones, path to museum                                    |
| 11) | View to north: path to museum  |
| 12) | View to west: ponderosa marking the junction of the trails                         |
| 13) | View to northwest: trail   |
| 14) | View to south: sign, bench, and view   |
| 15) | View to north: addition to museum  |
| 16) | View to west: from the trail towards the museum                                    |
| 17) | View to south: view from front door  |
| 18) | View to southeast: path to museum entrance   |
| 19) | View to north: stairs to amphitheater  |
| 20) | View to east: parking lot and museum   |
| 21) | View to northeast: culvert under entrance road                                     |
| 22) | View to southwest: culvert under entrance road                                     |
| 23) | View to southeast: sign  |
| 24) | View to southeast: sign and entrance road with Moraine Park Museum in the distance |

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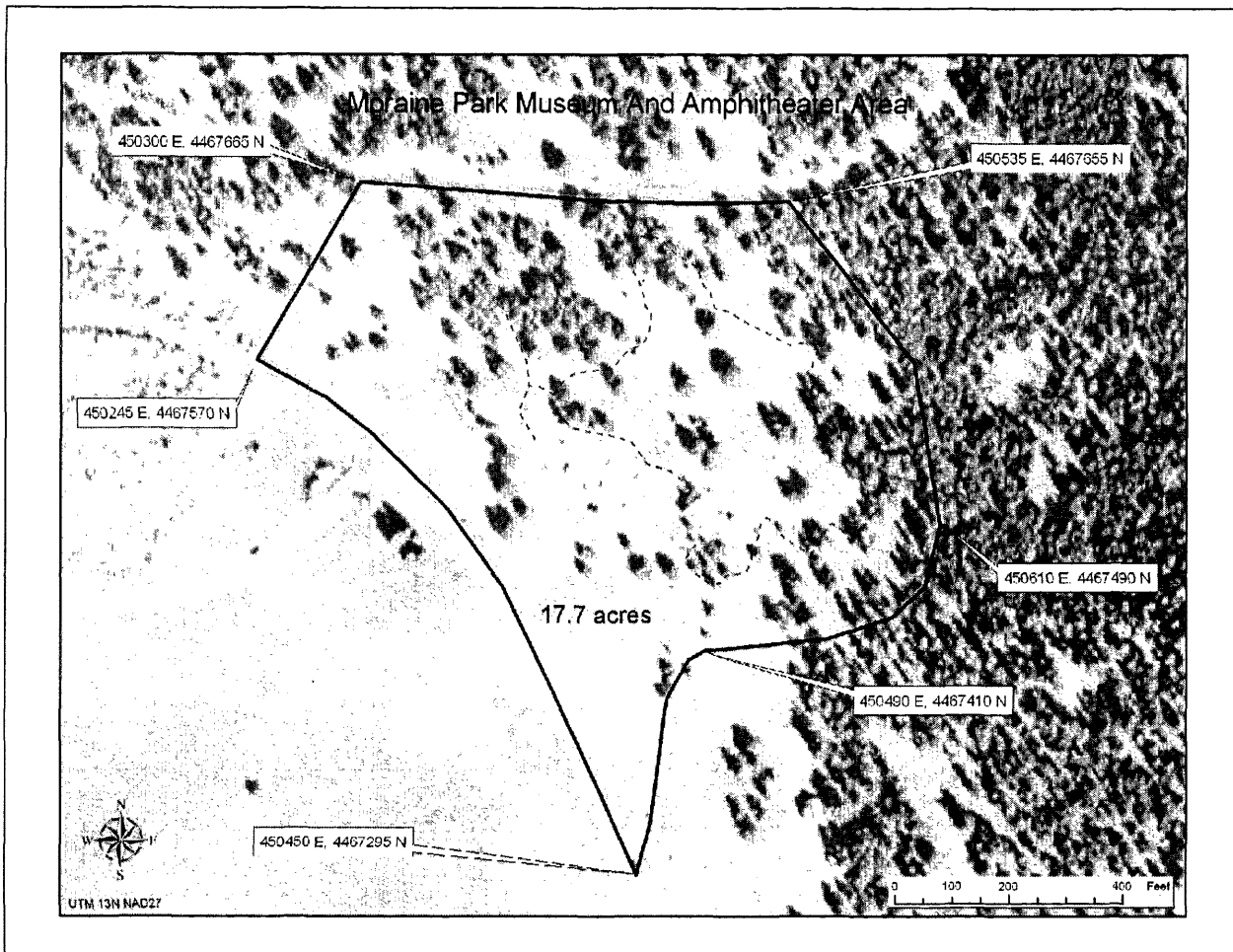
## GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The historic district boundary is indicated by the solid black line on the to scale aerial map below.

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries were drawn to encompass the parcel of land containing the concentration of structures, the museum building, and landscape features historically associated with the property.



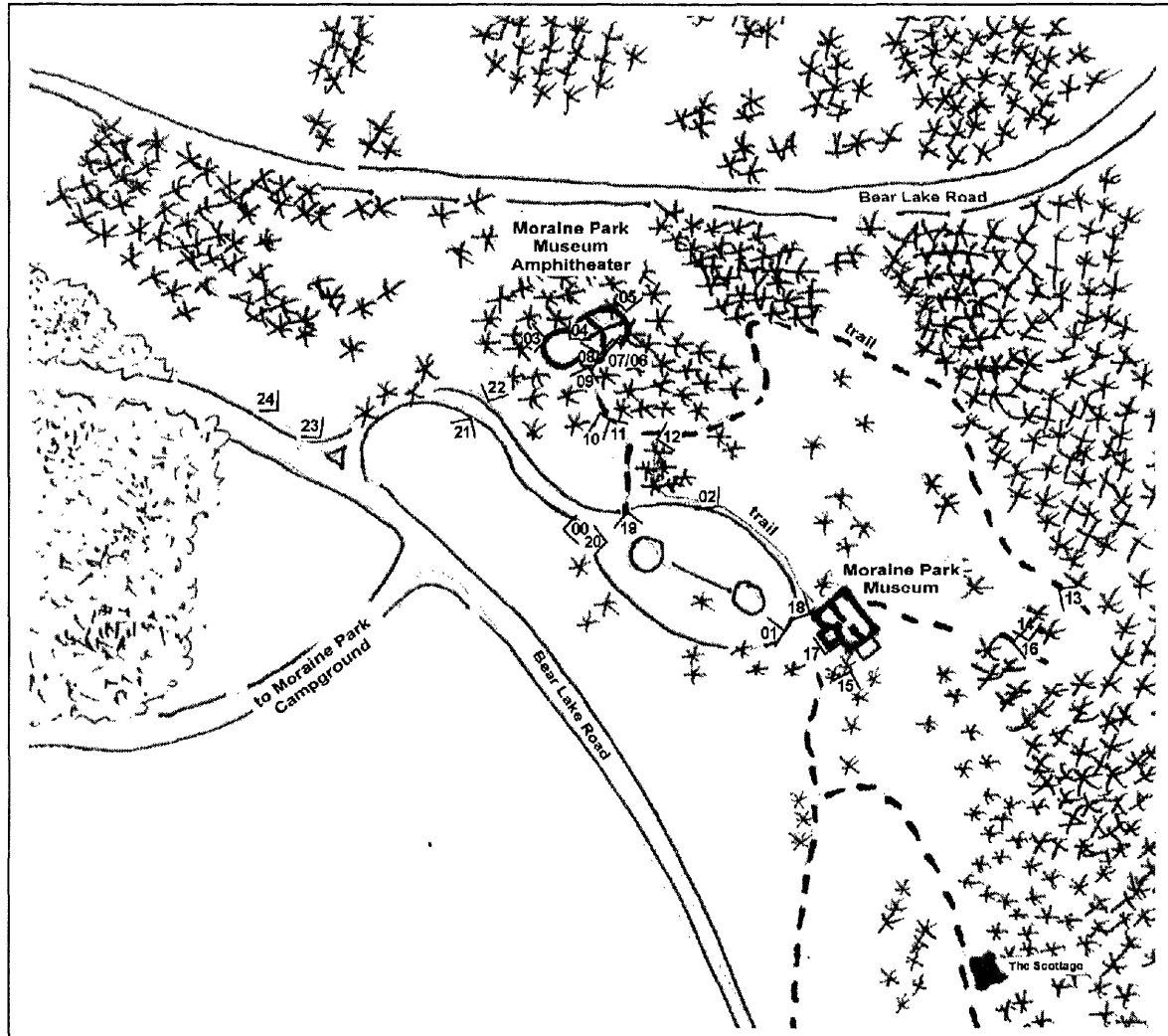
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## Photograph locations



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**USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP**  
Longs Peak Quadrangle, Colorado  
7.5 Minute Series

Elevation: 8030 feet  
PLSS: 6<sup>th</sup> PM, T5N, R73W, Sec. 33  
NW¼, NE¼, NE¼, SW¼; SW¼, SE¼, NW¼;  
SE¼, SE¼, NW¼

