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 areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property	
historic name College Hill Park Bathhouse	
other names/site number	
2. Location	
street & number 304 S. Circle Drive	[N/A] not for publication
city or town Wichita	[N/A] vicinity
state Kansas code KS county Sedgwick	code <u>173</u> zip code <u>67218</u>
3. State/Federal Agency Certification	
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation on nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and my opinion, the property meets does not meet the Nation considered significant nationally statewide locally. (State Historic Places and meets the procedural and my opinion, the property statewide locally. (State Historic Preservation	documentation standards for registering properties in the professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In nal Register criteria. I recommend that this property be
In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)	Register criteria.
Signature of certifying official/Title	Date
State or Federal agency and bureau	
4. National Park Service Certification I hereby certify that the property is: I 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 See continuation sheet. other, explain See continuation sheet.	Date of Action 4.16.08

College Hill Park Bathhouse Name of Property		Sedgwick County, Kansas County/State			
5. Classification					
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resourc	ces within Property ed resources.) Noncontributing		
[] private [X] building(s) [X] public-local [] district [] public-State [] site [] public-Federal [] structure [] object		1000	1 0 1 0	buildingssitesstructuresobjects	
		1	2	Total	
Name of related multi (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a m		Number of cont previously listed			
New Deal-era Resource	es of Kansas	_0		_	
6. Function or Use					
Historic Function (Enter categories from instructions) RECREATION & CULT recreation	ΓURE/outdoor	Current Fund (Enter categories from in the ca	instructions) N & CULTURE/c	outdoor	
7. Description Architectural Classific (Enter categories from instructions) LATE 19 TH & 20 TH CEI		Materials (Enter categories from i	instructions) CONCRETE		
Mission/Spanish Colo		walls . roof . other .	BRICK CERAMIC TILE	=	

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

College Hill Park Bathhouse Name of Property	Sedgwick County, Kansas County/State		
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.)	Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions) SOCIAL HISTORY		
[x] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.	ARCHITECTURE		
[] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.	Periods of Significance		
[x] 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.	Significant Dates		
[] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.	N/A		
Criteria Considerations (Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)			
Property is:	Significant Person(s) (Complete if Criterion B is marked above). N/A		
[] A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.			
[] B removed from its original location.	Cultural Affiliation N/A		
[] C a birthplace or grave.	IN/A		
[] D a cemetery.	Architect/Builder		
[] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.	Edward Forsblom/WPA		
[] 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 cont	tinuation sheets.)		
Previous documentation on file (NPS):	Primary location of additional data:		
□ 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	State Historic Preservation Office ☐ Other State Agency ☐ Federal Agency ☐ Local Government ☐ University ☐ Other		
# Record # #	Name of repository: Wichita Parks & Recreation Department Wichita Historic Preservation Office		

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•			ables Preservation			date_August 7, 2006
			Pine Glade Road			telephone_202-258-3136
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		at the request of	SHPO or FPO.)			
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		Wichita			. Kansas	•
			nt: This information is being collected for a roperties, and to amend existing listings.			Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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SUMMARY

The College Hill Park Bathhouse is located in College Hill Park, a twenty-two acre park in Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas. The park is between Douglas Avenue on the north, Bluff on the east, Lewis Street on the south, and Clifton on the west. The bathhouse is located in the southwest corner of the park, south of Circle Drive. It is an example of a "social and recreational" facility discussed in Section F of the Multiple Property Documentation Form "New Deal-era Resources of Kansas" (hereafter referred to as "MPDF"). The brick bathhouse exhibits the character-defining features of the Spanish Colonial Revival style as evidenced by its low-pitched roof with no overhang, a red tile roof covering, an arcade supported by columns, molded capitals, arched window openings, grills on windows, and an enriched door surround The shelter retains integrity all areas of consideration. Included in the nominated property is a non-contributing structure (pool) and a non-contributing building (the pumphouse).

ELABORATION

College Hill Park is an irregularly shaped tract bounded generally by Douglas Avenue on the north, Bluff on the east, Lewis Street on the south, and Clifton on the west. There are two streets which bisect the park and which vary from the surrounding neighborhoods' grid system of streets. The nominated property containing the bathhouse is located in the southwest corner of the park, just southwest of one of Circle Drive. The bathhouse is set on a rise overlooking the pool area (non-contributing), which is immediately south of the building. There is a rectangular swimming pool with lanes, and a quarter-circle wading pool with mushroom spray fountain. A one-story rectangular plan pumphouse with red tile gable roof is on the southwest corner of the pool. It has two metal doors and a metal garage door on the southwest elevation, and is clad in buff brick that matches the bathhouse; it is also non-contributing due to its recent construction date. An iron fence surrounds the pool area, and connects with the front wings of the bathhouse.

The one-story buff brick bathhouse is designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The building has an H-plan with an arcaded porch set between the two front projecting wings. The roofs are low-pitched gable with no overhang, and are sheathed with red tiles. A molded metal cornice is just below the eaves, and forms slight end returns on the gable ends. The semi-circular arches of the porch are set on square columns of dressed-faced Silverdale limestone blocks with chamfered corners. The arches of the porch and window lintels are radiating voussoirs of vertical bricks stretchers; the windows have a single row, while the porch arches are double.

Beneath the arcaded porch is a centered entry, with double doors and transoms all with multipanes. The windows on both of the two gable front wings are grouped in threes, with the N.S. Form 10-900-a (8-86) OMB Approval No. 1024-0018

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centered window slightly larger. The multi-paned squared sashes are presently colored tiles, forming a design of peacocks and flowers; these replace the historic multi-paned clear glass sashes. Window and floor sills are dressed-face Silverdale limestone. There are two paneled doors on each of the remaining elevations; the east and west side doors have surrounds elaborated with corbeled brick, with the sides mimicking stone blocks, and the large corbeled lintel projecting from the elevation several rows. The surrounds on the rear doors, on the other hand, are plain. The majority of the remaining windows on the building are small and set high; they all have metal window grills.

The bathhouse has two locker/shower and restroom facilities — one each for men and women. There are concrete block pillars and walls separating the shower areas, and metal panels separating each toilet facility. The exposed wood rafters are partly covered by wood louver panels. There are also freestanding metal lockers. There is an additional room for the office, which has a beaded board ceiling and brick interior walls. The interior walls for all rooms are exposed brick, and there are poured concrete floors.

The primary alteration to the building is in the area of materials, and is comparatively minor: the multi-paned arched windows on the two gable-front wings have colored tiles replacing the glass sashes. These tiles are still arranged in a manner similar to the original glass sashes, and the key character-defining design element of the window – the arched lintels – is clearly evident. The integrity of setting has also been partially diminished with the construction of a new pool. However, the location of the pool is basically the same. The continued use of the area for water recreation results in the bathhouse retaining integrity in association and feeling. Integrity of design remains high, as the primary character-defining features which are identified with the Spanish Colonial Revival style remain.

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SUMMARY

The College Hill Park Bathhouse is significant under Criterion A in the area of **Social History** and Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The bathhouse is associated with the historic context outlined in the Multiple Property Documentation Form "New Deal-era Resources of Kansas" (hereafter referred to as "MPDF"). The context discusses the effect of the series of programs enacted by Franklin Roosevelt's administration during the Great Depression to provide relief, reform and recovery for the nation. These programs were collectively known as the "New Deal." Wichita and particularly the surrounding agricultural region were affected by not only the economic and agricultural depressions, but the drought and resulting Dust Bowl years during the "dirty thirties." A multitude of New Deal programs gave relief for the citizens of Wichita; some of these programs provided employment working on the construction or maintenance of public works projects. In Wichita, these work-relief projects ranged from the huge Ackerman Island removal project to painting and landscaping. The bathhouse was constructed as a WPA project in 1937 (its period of significance), and represents how the Wichita parks department was able to continue the development of its parks system through the use of federal assistance during the Depression, while at the same time providing jobs for the unemployed of Wichita. It is also significant as a good example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style as applied to a park building during the Depression era.

ELABORATION

College Hill Park was located in the Merriman Park Addition. Due to the deep ravines and hilly topography, it was unsuitable for residential construction and was not platted for lots at the time of its initial development. As noted in the *Wichita Beacon* in 1929, at that time developers

never considered selection of land for actual residence unless the terrain was almost level. As a result the rolling slopes along this ravine and the steeper shoulder were excluded form the plants and buyers purchased lots extending righ tup to the rim of this rough land, then built their houses fronting eery direction except toward the ugly ravine.¹

From 1901 to 1911, the land was originally the site of the Wichita County Club's nine hole golf course, which "twisted back and forth in a relatively small space . . . and its principal hazards

¹Wichita Beacon (28 April 1929).

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were the three ravines, which may still be seen."² After it was no longer used as a golf course, the ravines became known locally as the "dump hole." Under pressure from the residents in the adjoining College Hill neighborhood, the city acquired twenty-two acres in the unplatted area through the generosity of about twenty-five homeowners. The area previously known as the "dump hole" was now lauded in the newspaper as "the most entrancing public park area, and development that could have been selected by an Olmstead, master landscape designer, for a residential recreational area."³

L. W. Clapp prepared plans for the new park in 1929. The plans utilized the park's three ravines. Lewis William "L.W." Clapp arrived in Wichita during the boom years of the 1880s, and helped form a successful farm loan business. From 1917, he devoted himself to civic improvements for Wichita. Clapp served as Wichita's mayor from 1918-1919, City Manager from 1919-1921, and as President of the Board of Park Commission from 1921 until his death in 1934.⁴ He was not only responsible for much of the early development of city's park system, but he also initiated the parks department's dependence upon the New Deal to fund the vast majority of maintenance and development projects in Wichita's parks during the 1930s. He was followed by Alfred MacDonald, who became Director of the Parks and Forestry Department and the Board of Park Commission after Clapp died. Like Clapp, MacDonald also served as City Manager from 1939 to 1941. MacDonald has been brought to Wichita in 1920 by Clapp to organize the City Forestry Service, and shared his landscape aesthetic in park



design.⁵ Also like Clapp, he continued the parks department's reliance on New Deal work relief

²Craig Miner, A History of the Wichita County Club 1900-1970 (North Newton, KS: Mennonite Press, 1975) 24.

³Wichita Democrat (22 October 1932).

⁴Pamela Kingsbury, "Historic Wichita Parks Survey Report," (2003) 4.

⁵Ibid., 5.

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programs to not only maintain the parks, but to continue their development during the Depression.

Clapp's "Plan of College Hill's New Park" of 1929, as well any development in the remainder of the parks system, were put on hold with the onset of the Depression. There continued to be discussion through the early 1930s of future development of the park which could be "developed progressively in future years, at expense only of employment of labor, without purchase of material." As Parks and Forestry Director Alfred MacDonald noted,

The very qualities which made the park land a poor place for residences, would make a beautiful ground for park purposes. It is rough and irregular, which is the very thing wanted for scenic effects. It is wet, which makes if fine for growing grass, trees and shrubbery, and it is a natural bowl, which would enable [sic] the park to be used for an amphitheater if desired. ⁷

The issue during the Depression, of course, was finding the funds for labor in the city's strapped budget.

The New Deal in Wichita

Wichita had enjoyed a decade of prosperity and growth during the 1920s. It was not unusual, then, to find that few residents in Wichita were overly concerned with the stock market crash of 1929. As Nestor Weigand noted later, "the big cities were oriented to buying stocks, we weren't and there weren't a lot of local companies issuing stock." Wichita was always an optimistic city, and the 1920s had been a decade replete with that optimism. And why not? The booming growth of that decade was shared by nearly every sector of the city's economy: housing, business, and new industries, not the least of which was aviation. Although the surrounding agricultural area had suffered during the 1920s, this too was slowly improving by the time of the stock market crash. Even in 1930, there were few signs that the impending nationwide economic catastrophe would eventually affect Wichita. That would soon change. Employees began to be

⁷"College Hill Park," Kansas Historic Resources Inventory Reconnaissance Form, 8 January 2003.

⁶Wichita Democrat.

⁸Craig Miner, Wichita: The Magic City (Wichita: Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum Association, 1988) 177.

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laid off in the early 1930s as companies experienced declining profits. At the beginning of 1932, there were 500 employees of Wichita's Coleman Lamp and Stove Company, which was about half the number it employed just a few years ago. Other companies would not weather the economic crisis, and when forced into bankruptcy, all of their employees were added to the unemployment rolls. The aviation industry, which seemed so promising for Wichita's future just a few years ago, was suffering. Foreclosure judgement on the Swallow Airplane Company buildings, land, and equipment was granted in October 1932 on the basis of overdue promissory notes owed Russell Moore, Wichita capitalist. Other transportation-related companies were suffering as well. The Wichita Transportation Company began operating at a deficit in 1930, the first year of the Depression. The Frisco Railroad went into receivership in November 1932, and at the end of March 1933, the Missouri Pacific Railroad filed for bankruptcy. In an attempt to avoid the same result, passenger fares on the Arkansas Valley Interurban railway were reduced in April 1933 from 3.6 cents per mile to 2.5 cents per mile, and the Yellow Cab Company reduced its fares in 1932 and dropped its charge for extra passengers.

Wichita workers that did not lose their jobs saw either their pay or hours reduced. When the Wichita Transportation Company proposed reducing the wages of bus drivers and street car motorman by five cents an hour in 1932 and refused to negotiate, the employees took their complaints to the city commission. ¹³ By contrast, Wichita school teachers, who had taken a ten percent pay cut at the start of the contract year for 1932-1933, voluntarily offered in February 1933 to take a further ten percent cut for the remainder of the contract year in order to keep their

⁹Wichita Eagle (7 January 1932) 5.

¹⁰Ibid., (7 October 1932) 5.

¹¹Ibid., (2 November 1932) 1; (1 April 1933) 1.

¹²Ibid., (31 March 1933) 3; (3 April 1932) 5.

¹³ Wichita Beacon (29 March 1932) 10.

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jobs.¹⁴ Salaries at the Municipal University of Wichita were also cut by ten percent in 1930, and twenty percent in 1931.¹⁵

Agricultural conditions in the region surrounding Wichita worsened in the early 1930s as well. In fact, agriculture during the 1920s never really experienced the same growth as other segments of the economy. The first World War had inflated wheat prices in the United States, in part due reduced foreign competition coupled with an increased demand. Once the war began, the federal government guaranteed wheat prices at over two dollars a bushel — more than double that of the richest boom year prior to that time. These prices however, created an artificial norm against which farmers would subsequently compare their situation. It also witnessed a quickening in the pace of farm rationalization throughout the states of the Midwest and Great Plains. More and more farmers turned to machines to facilitate the cultivation of their fields, and more significantly, to bring even more acres under the plow in order to take advantage of high wheat prices by expanding their production. With the eventual resumption of agriculture in Europe after World War I, wheat prices declined dramatically. Farmers felt that the only way to make ends meet was to once again increase their acreage. Technological innovations in the 1920s, including the one-way disc plow invented by a Kansas farmer, allowed farmers to plow under even greater amounts of sod for wheat cultivation. These new plows, along with mechanized tractors and combines and finally the additional acreage, were all expensive to purchase. Most farmers during the twenties had to rely on creative financing in an attempt to plow more acres of wheat, with the hope they could eventually come out ahead. With persistence and a favorable weather cycle, though, wheat prices were beginning to rise by the time of the stock market crash, although prices still had not reached their war levels.

After the crash, prices for all agricultural products began to decline in 1930. More significant for agriculture on the Great Plains was the severe drought that began in 1931 and lasted nearly a decade; this led to the collapse of farm prices nationwide. The drought did not affect the wheat production totals in the state in 1931, which was the largest crop in history until 1947, but price per bushel of 33 cents was the lowest on record. The following year, the number of statewide

¹⁴Wichita Eagle (7 February 1933) 5.

¹⁵Miner, 177.

¹⁶Mark D. Hersey, "Dust In The Wind," KansasHistoryOnline, ed. Henry J. Fortunato, [5/27/2004], Hall Center for the Humanities, http://www.kansashistoryonline.org/ksh/articlepage.asp?artid=104 (26 June 2006).

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barrels dropped fifty percent due to both low prices and the poorest planting conditions in years. The drought conditions worsened in 1933, and the state average yield per acre was 9.1 bushels, the lowest in 38 years. The total wheat production was the smallest since 1917.¹⁷ As a large segment of Wichita's economy was dependent upon the success of the wheat crops, these statistics further impacted the local economy. Wheat prices in Wichita reflected the national and statewide trends, with the price of wagon wheat in Wichita dropped to its lowest prices in 1931 and 1932, where it ranged from 26 to 34 cents per bushel.¹⁸ The drought affected livestock as well, with livestock receipts in Wichita dropping in 1931 to 906,781 head, compared with 1,056,214 in 1930.¹⁹

With almost all segments of the economy affected by the Depression, there was naturally less revenue coming into the city's coffers. Delinquent taxes and reductions in revenue cut the city's income by nearly one half million in 1931 and 1932. Any consideration of improving or building new civic projects, or even maintaining the city's infrastructure was put on hold until other funding sources could be found. Even that was not enough to cover the loss in revenues. In order to remain solvent, the city eliminated jobs and reduced the wages of those employees that remained by twelve to twenty percent.²⁰

For those residents that lost jobs, either private or public, some relief was provided by local governments or charity. Prior to the establishment of any federal relief programs, the city, county and community chest provided over 53,000 man days of work for Wichita residents. Due to the extreme demand for assistance, this relief work was restricted to married man who had resided in the city for at least a year and who had no other source of income. The unemployed were allowed two days of work a week at a wage of \$2.25 a day. The city also sponsored "tag days" to allow the unemployed to work off debts for necessities. Private charities tried their best to provide assistance, although their funds were also stretched to the limits due to the Depression. The Lions Club and Salvation Army erected apple stands on street corners for the unemployed,

¹⁷Kansas Department of Agriculture & U.S. Department of Agriculture, Kansas Wheat History (Topeka, KS: Kansas Department of Agriculture, Statistics Division, November 2004) 6-7.

¹⁸Wichita Eagle (21 June 1936) 7.

¹⁹Ibid., (1 January 1932) 2.

²⁰Miner, 180.

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but it was unlikely that this provided much aid to families during this crisis.²¹ A record number of unemployed was recorded in Wichita at the start of 1932, and reports of suicides began to dominate the local newspaper headlines.²²

Although Wichita tried to meet the needs of local citizens, the scope of the economic and agricultural crises was beyond the city's means to solve. It would require measures from the state and national levels. At first, though, the responses from both were generally weak or ineffective. Kansas' state constitution contained legislation that precluded it from caring for the poor. Cities and towns in the state could divert funds from their budgets for work relief, but were not allowed by law to appropriate any money for direct relief. Although nearly two million dollars had been raised in 1931 by the state's counties for poor relief, by the end of the summer of 1932, all of these funds were depleted.²³ Governor Woodring formed the Kansas Federal Relief Committee in July 1932 (later renamed the Kansas Emergency Relief Committee, or KERC), but it was formed primarily as a conduit for any federal funds that may be furnished to the state. In effect, the state turned to the federal government for help.²⁴

Nearly three years after the onset of the national Depression, President Hoover finally signed the Emergency Relief and Construction Act. This act, which provided federal loans to the states to finance the construction of public works, failed to provide much relief to Kansas or the nation. The Depression, which had now expanded worldwide, combined with the effects of the drought, eventually brought Wichita's growth to a standstill. For the first time in memory for many Wichita residents, the population decreased, although slightly. The assessor recorded a decrease in the county's population in 1931, the State Board of Agriculture reported that the city lost 2599 in population from 1932 to 1933; the Chamber of Commerce naturally disputed the figure, perhaps hoping to keep further bad news about the economic situation from the residents.²⁵

²¹Ibid., 180.

²²R. M. Long, Wichita Century: A Pictorial History of Wichita, Kansas, 1870-1970 (Wichita, KS: Wichita Historical Museum Association, Inc., 1969) 163-164.

²³Tully, 19.

²⁴Ibid., 21.

²⁵Wichita Eagle (14 May 1932) 5; (14 October 1933) 2.

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In these desperate times, Americans would eventually turn to the federal government for assistance. They would not be disappointed. Over the next decade, federal government agencies assisted Wichita, the state, and the nation by creating programs that funded public improvement projects and provided work for the unemployed as well. These agencies were part of Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal," a term coined during his acceptance of the Democratic party's nomination to the presidency.

"I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people."

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Immediately after his inauguration in March 1933, Roosevelt took action by declaring a national bank holiday. The purpose of this holiday to was place a short moratorium on the bank closures that were sweeping the nation. For some, it was too late, as the Depression continued to worsen before some of Roosevelt's other measures could take effect. There were thirteen banks in Wichita just before the crash in 1929. Only six remained to reopen in 1933 after the moratorium.²⁶ Some, like the Union National Bank building, were sold at a sheriff's sale, to satisfy their judgements.²⁷ The greatest impact the holiday may have had was on the nation's mood – here, finally, was a president that would take action. Indeed, no one can accuse his administration of inaction. In his first one hundred days of office, Roosevelt created a virtual "alphabet army" of New Deal programs. These programs provided millions of dollars for jobs and public projects; more importantly, they brought a hope to an impoverished nation.

Franklin Roosevelt's administration addressed the problems of the nation with a basic three-pronged approach: relief, reform, and recovery. A number of New Deal programs were regulatory in nature, affecting banking, business, labor, the stock market, prices, agriculture and business loans, and farm subsidy programs. Other New Deal programs sought to alleviate the immediate problem of relief for the unemployed, which was undertaken in two ways. The first was to provide direct relief to families, many of whom had been out-of-work for years. Second, the New Deal initiated several programs that provided work for the unemployed through public improvement projects. Some of the projects were service-oriented, such as canning and sewing projects, hot school lunch projects, and white-collar jobs. Others put people back to work on the construction of public buildings and works projects. Some of the most common construction

²⁶Kay Kirkman, Wichita: A Pictorial History (Norfolk, VA: Donning Company, 1981) 103.

²⁷Wichita Eagle (17 September 1933) 5.

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agencies were the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Public Works Administration (PWA), and the Works Progress Administration (later the Works Projects Administration, or WPA). Other less common programs included the National Youth Administration (NYA).

In spite of Wichita's general reluctance to accept federal intervention and its preference for private action instead, all of the New Deal programs – not just those that constructed public projects – significantly impacted the city's economy during the Depression. As Craig Miner noted in *Wichita: The Magic City*, New Deal programs were enthusiastically accepted by the city government "as a way not only of surviving with minimal disturbance from the unemployed, but actually constructing with federal help long delayed projects that would be important to Wichita's prosperity in the post-emergency years." Furthermore, it did not want "to let hard times deprive it permanently of its reputation as a progressive place." So the city took full advantage of the offer of federal funds for relief and recovery. In addition to direct relief, much of the federal assistance went towards projects that not only put people back to work, but built civic projects that would last through to the next century.

Wichita jumped on the bandwagon of support for the New Deal, which was relayed in a December 1933 issue of the *Eagle*, which printed a full-age portrait of Roosevelt with a caption "Mr. President – Wichita is Behind You." The reason for the support was obvious. Within less than a year of existence, Roosevelt's New Deal programs had already benefitted the city of Wichita by putting 2,800 people back to work in private business, increasing the city payroll by \$170,000 monthly, putting 4,700 back to work on civil works projects in Wichita at a weekly rate of \$12, loaning over \$40 million from the Wichita Regional Agricultural Credit Corporation to farmers in four surrounding states, and providing 600 home loans for area residents by the Home Owners Loan Corporation.²⁹

Although many of the foundations for Roosevelt's New Deal programs were established by the mid-1930s, the effects of the Depression were far-reaching, and would take years to overcome. Furthermore, nature continued to assault the Great Plains. Dust storms plagued Wichita throughout the mid-1930s, with the worst dust storm the city had seen occurring on April 11, 1935. This storm suspended about five million tons of sediment over a 78 square kilometer area near Wichita. An all time record high temperature of 112.3 degrees Fahrenheit was set on July

²⁸Miner, 181-182; 179.

²⁹Ibid., 181.

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18, 1935, and dust storms still affected the city in 1937.³⁰ Thus federal support for Wichita's economy through New Deal programs increased even more in the latter half of the thirties. In 1934, over \$25 million was spent on relief in Sedgwick County. By 1935 relief programs in Wichita, with over sixty case workers hired to handle the paperwork, were a major part of the economy. It was estimated 25,000 people in Sedgwick County were dependent on these programs, approximately one quarter of the county's population. When the WPA became active in 1935, the amount of federal involvement in the local economy grew even more. Between 1935 and 1940, this one agency alone spent \$8,500,000 in Wichita and at one time employed 3,000 local people.³¹ Wichita's population began to rise again, albeit slowly. One theory for this might be the exodus of families from the surrounding agricultural region into the city in hopes of obtaining work, either through private employment but more likely through one of the many large New Deal work-relief projects in Wichita.



President Franklin Roosevelt and First Lady, Eleanor, soon after arriving at Union Station in 1936.

From the Wichita Public Library Local History Section, wpl_wpl60.

³⁰Wichita Eagle (11 April 1935) 1; (19 July 1936) 2; (16 February 1937) 12.

³¹Miner, 182.

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When Franklin Roosevelt came to Wichita prior to his reelection in 1936, he was warmly greeted by the citizens. His speech was held at Lawrence Stadium, a public project which had employed hundreds of out-of-work Wichita men during its construction – initially a Civil Works Administration project and later expanded with two Federal Emergency Relief grants.

Near the end of the 1930s, Wichita's economy began to rebound earlier than some other areas of the country. The development of oil fields nearby helped, as did the renewed growth in the aircraft industry at the end of the decade. Employment in Wichita's aircraft factories tripled from the previous year in 1940, reaching 4700.³² With the nation gearing up for war, that number exploded in the following year. Many could thus successfully argue that Roosevelt's New Deal programs were not responsible for lifting Wichita out of the Depression. However, for the individual families that received direct assistance, loans, or employment, the New Deal carried them through the difficult times of the Depression and the Dust Bowl. Furthermore, without the construction of public projects funded and built by New Deal programs, Wichita would have been ill-prepared to face the boom years that would follow. The city was able to put the devastating years of the Depression behind it as it continued to use New Deal projects in the coming decades, ranging from countless road and park improvements, extensive expansion of the municipal university, a new art museum, and a new water softening system and filtration plant.

The New Deal & Work Relief: the Works Progress Administration

Although the early programs of the New Deal had relieved the suffering of some Americans, it was clear as 1934 was ending that the economic depression and problems of unemployment were not going away. The success of the Civilian Conservation Corps had convinced Roosevelt to come up with another similar approach to unemployment. Most New Dealers believed that working was better than the "dole." By giving the unemployed a job, much more was provided than a paycheck – they regained their dignity and hope as well. The Roosevelt administration thus proposed to end FERA, its program of direct relief to the states, and replace it with a broader relief and recovery program known as the "Second New Deal." Central to this new phase was a work relief program for the unemployed, established as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) on May 6, 1935. The WPA not only absorbed the former FERA public works program, but modified and expanded work relief to become the major source of public jobs for the unemployed during the latter part of the thirties. The program's name was changed to the Works Projects Administration in 1939 when it was reorganized.

³²Wichita Eagle (24 November 1940), 1.

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The main goal of the WPA program was to put the unemployed back to work and remove them from the relief rolls. "Small useful projects" were designed to provide employment for a maximum number of needy "employable" workers in the "shortest time possible." Although not all WPA projects were construction-related, its public works projects required that a majority of a project's cost be spent on wages, not on construction materials. Virtually the entire cost of WPA projects was paid directly by the federal government, except for relatively small sums paid by the sponsor. This contrasted with the PWA projects, which were generally larger, more expensive, new construction only (no repairs or maintenance), and were financed by a grant or combined grant and loan. Whereas the PWA's goal was to stimulate the economy and the private employment of labor, whether or not in need of relief, the WPA's goal was to put as many people back to work as possible. The WPA eventually grew into the largest provider of work relief in the nation during the remainder of the Depression. In the three year period ending June 30, 1938, about three-fourths of all federal relief works programs employment was provided by the WPA; about one-eighth was provided by the CCC, and the remaining one-eighth by the PWA and all other agencies combined.³³

Harry L. Hopkins was appointed the chief administrator of the WPA, and in turn, he appointed the directors of each state office. The state WPA offices replaced the local Emergency Relief Administration offices created under FERA. There were two main divisions in the WPA which provided jobs – the Division of Engineering and Construction, which oversaw manually constructed projects, and the Service Projects Division.³⁴ The construction projects brought about the most widespread and significant change in public capital improvements that the state and nation had ever witnessed, with projects covering municipal engineering, airports and airways, public buildings, highways and roads, conservation projects, engineering survey projects, and disaster emergency activities. The WPA construction projects were intended to provide employment to a large number of unskilled workers, but they also used skilled and semi-skilled workers. Certified WPA skilled workers included carpenters, bricklayers, stone masons, mechanics, painters, plumbers, and others; but also included railroad trainmen and others who could not use their skills on WPA projects. Semiskilled workers included truck drivers and factory workers who had to be assigned other work. Since not all workers' skills could be used on WPA projects, some were obliged to adapt themselves.

³³U.S., Federal Works Agency, Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-1943 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1947) 7-8.

³⁴Other divisions within the organization dealt with administrative issues.

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Nationwide, about half of the construction employment went to highway, road, and street projects. Public utilities such as water and sewage systems, projects for parks, and projects for public buildings made another third, and the remainder involved conservation, sanitation, and airport projects. The construction of public buildings generally involved the highest percentage of skilled workers on a project – about 30 %. Road construction usually required as little as eight percent skilled workers. Foremen were generally hired from outside the project; if they later were able to find other work, the project supervisor would often promote from within. In fact, the WPA provided training for all unskilled workers in the use of unfamiliar tools, and many were promoted up through the skilled grades.³⁵

The Service Projects covered a wide variety of work projects, and provided employment to women as well as white-collar professionals. Projects relating to adult education, the arts (including writing, music, performance, and the visual arts), records and research projects provided jobs to people who had lost related work in similar professions. Rural women were given jobs in sewing, gardening, canning, commodity distribution, and serving hot lunches – thereby taking a two-part approach to helping the needy: by providing jobs for the women employed on the projects, and distributing the goods to the needy. Only the National Youth Administration (NYA) program sometimes worked on construction projects.

The vast majority of WPA projects were planned, initiated and sponsored by county, city, and other various local public agencies. Suggestions for local projects might come from WPA officials, as well as from civic organizations or private citizens. The formal proposals, however, had to be made by a public agency legally empowered to support the work proposed. The project application had to show the estimated cost of work, what portion was paid by sponsors, and the amount and kinds of labor required. Proposals for construction projects had to be accompanied by preliminary engineering/architectural plans and specs.³⁶ Actual working drawings were often prepared by the sponsor after approval by Washington.

Although the planning and initiation of projects was the sponsor's responsibility, WPA officials often suggested eligible projects. Sometimes project proposals were prepared cooperatively by the responsible local officials and the WPA district engineer, particularly in the cases of rural

³⁵U.S., Federal Works Agency, 45.

³⁶No preliminary plans or specs remain for WPA projects at the National Archives in College Park, Md. In rare occasions when a proposal was modified, these plans were sometimes retained with the project file.

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communities and small towns with no access to architects or professional planners. If unsuitable projects were submitted by small communities which had no engineering departments, these plans usually were not rejected outright, but returned with suggestions for revisions. Since the purpose of the program was to get as many people to work as fast as possible, the WPA rarely tried to improve upon the plans. For larger cities, though, engineering departments began advance planning with a view of securing WPA assistance, and divided public works requiring more than one year in construction into progressive phases meeting the \$25,000 maximum funding ceiling; these phases were then approved over several funding periods. This allowed larger projects to be constructed with a minimum of sponsor match, as opposed to that required if the larger projects had been funded by the PWA.³⁷

Since the Depression had basically halted all planning for local public works, many communities were not prepared to submit plans for new public facilities. Thus in the early stages of the WPA program, many of the initial projects involved repairing buildings. As the program developed and expanded, more applications for new construction were received. Furthermore, many of the projects became more sophisticated, which often led to a higher percentage of skilled labor needed. Since the WPA program was geared towards increasing employment for unskilled labor, monolithic concrete construction came into greater use (since it required the least amount of highly skilled labor.)

The selection of building materials was also affected by the WPA's comparatively lenient requirements for match. There was no fixed minimum percentage for sponsor's contribution to a WPA project until the ERA Act of 1939, which increased the sponsors' contributions within a state to twenty-five percent of the cost of all projects. As this percentage was given to a state as a whole, rather than individual projects, the states had some leeway in determining which projects to approve. Some states even assisted local governments with state funds. A sponsor's contribution did not have to be cash; it could include office space, supplies, construction materials, equipment, tools, skilled labor, and technical supervision.³⁸ If building materials could not be found locally or salvaged from other WPA demolition projects, then other inexpensive materials were used. Concrete was again desirable from the sponsor's point of view as it was less expensive than most other forms of construction, thereby lowering the project's

³⁷U.S., Federal Works Agency, 29.

³⁸Ibid., p. 9.

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total costs and therefore the sponsor's contribution. Other inexpensive construction materials included locally quarried stone, or resources salvaged from other WPA demolition projects.

Other inherent goals of the WPA were reflected in trends regarding the style or design of these projects. Simple designs which eliminated ornate architectural features, intricate structural designs, and elaborate trim were best suited to unskilled labor. Furthermore, "[t]he WPA followed the newer tendencies towards simplification in architectural style." The WPA also urged sponsors to design buildings which would require the least amount of mechanized equipment as possible; again, to maximize the number of unskilled laborers and minimize the number of skilled laborers. "The result was the construction of thousands of public buildings of simple and pleasing appearance and sound architectural design, with savings both in original cost and in future maintenance." *40

Some of the employment goals of the WPA were not conducive to typical construction practices, though. Unlike the PWA, which laid off workers during the winter, the WPA's goal was to provide year-round employment if possible. The winter months were often the worse for unemployment, especially in agricultural areas, and the WPA did not want to add to the number of unemployed by laying off workers. WPA construction projects thus often broke with custom and carried on work that ordinarily would have been performed in better weather. Only in periods of extreme cold or storms were projects temporarily suspended.⁴¹

The Works Progress Administration was reorganized and renamed when it received additional appropriations in 1939. Now called the Works Projects Administration, it became a division of the Federal Works Agency. Sponsors were now also required to pay one-quarter of a project's projected costs. The new legislation also stipulated that states discharge of all relief workers who had been on the rolls for more than eighteen consecutive months, resulting in a reduction in the number of WPA workers available for projects. No part of the new appropriations for the WPA were to go for defense or military projects. The outbreak of World War II, however, changed that requirement, and the WPA began to move towards national defense. The WPA continued to reduce its rolls, and by 1942 the entire program concentrated on the war effort. The War Public

^{39&}lt;sub>Thid</sub>

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

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Works took over the remaining projects in 1942, just before Roosevelt ordered the liquidation of the program.

The WPA accounted for almost half of all federal relief appropriations in the nation during the entire depression. It is natural that the program would have a long list of accomplishments to match those appropriations. Major construction accomplishments nationwide included the building or improving of 651,000 miles of roads, the erection or improvement of 125,110 buildings, the installation of 16,100 miles water mains and distribution lines, 24,300 miles of sewerage facilities, and the construction of many airports. Service projects included hot lunch programs for schools, child health centers, recreation centers, and literacy classes. The total federal expenditure for all WPA projects in the U.S. was \$10,136,743,000, while the sponsor's contribution was \$2,837,713,000.

The WPA also could boast of some less tangible achievements. The program was significant for its assistance with local governments' preparations for long-range plans for municipal improvements. The WPA provided smaller communities with professional assistance in preparing designs for local projects, which otherwise would have had no access to this expertise. As its primary goal was to provide work for the unemployed, towards that goal the WPA employed approximately 8.5 million people nationwide during its existence, who were paid almost \$9 billion in WPA wages. During its eight years in operation, nearly one-fourth of all U.S. families were dependent on WPA wages for support. Despite this, only about one-quarter of the nation's unemployed were hired by the program. A program this expansive clearly had its detractors, and it certainly was not as popular as some other New Deal agencies, such as the CCC. Unlike the smaller and more rigid PWA, which managed to avoid many of the criticisms aimed at the WPA, the WPA was meant to put people back to work in every community that needed it. Therefore, some projects of lesser quality were accepted. To the millions of Americans who did receive jobs, the WPA provided a means to survive the Great Depression. It is clearly one of the most significant and expansive programs by which the New Deal was judged.

College Hill Park and the New Deal

In Wichita, the WPA was clearly the most significant New Deal work relief program after the mid 1930s. A substantial amount of maintenance and construction work in the city's park system, which had been delayed due to the Depression, was carried out by WPA workers. Many of these projects covered grading, seeding, riverbank stabilization, and other landscape maintenance. In addition to park projects, the WPA funded the majority of the \$540,000 in

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runways at the municipal airport, paid for over \$25,000 in road and bridge projects (which included over 500 miles of new roads), created a recreational lake west of town at Goddard, and built over 30,000 lineal feet of levees and embankments for flood control. Between 1935 and 1940, the WPA spent \$8,500,000 in Wichita and at one time employed 3,000 local people. In terms of dollars and man hours, the numerous road and runway projects comprised the bulk of the WPA construction projects in Wichita; hundreds of men were employed on single projects in these categories. Sedgwick County projects also provided employment for hundreds of men, both for farm-to-market roads and water control and conservation. In terms of extant resources in Wichita, though, the city's parks department was the greatest beneficiary of the WPA.

As previously noted, College Hill Park was acquired just prior to the stock market crash of 1929 and was undeveloped. With the severe budgetary restrictions facing all city departments during the 1930s, any development plans for a new park such as College Hill were put on hold; the city had a difficult time even paying for maintenance of the existing parks. When Roosevelt's New Deal provided funding and workers for public projects, Wichita's parks department moved quickly to take advantage of the various work relief programs. Other parks benefitted from some of the earlier work-relief programs such as the Civil Works Administration and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. With the establishment of the WPA and its much larger budget, the parks department expanded its development plans, and soon virtually every park was the beneficiary of either a maintenance or construction project. Shortly after L.W. Clapp's death in 1934, Alfred MacDonald hired the renowned Kansas City landscape architectural firm of Hare & Hare to prepare plans for College Hill Park, and in 1935 hired Wichita architect Edward Forsblom for the design of the bathhouse. WPA funds were used in 1936 for basic grading and seeding of the park, followed by the construction of a quality bathhouse that befitted the upscale neighborhood in which it was constructed. In 1937, a single arch limestone bridge from Hare & Hare's plans was built for a footpath in the park by WPA workers.

Construction of the bathhouse began in May 1936, and was completed in early 1937. The cost of construction was approximately \$25,000, which included "soft" match from the city. The dedication for the pool was May 23, 1937, and it opened about a week later on June 1. The pool was free, and was "for the use of boys and girls exclusively." The pool was 90 x 25 feet; at its east end was a 25 foot oval wading pool for smaller children which was 15 inches deep.

⁴²Miner, 182.

^{43. \$25,000} Swimming Pool and Bath House Ready for Hill Children," Wichita Eagle (23 May 1937).

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College Hill Park Pool and Bathhouse in 1937.
From Wichita State University Libraries' Department of Special Collections, wsu_ms2002-12.72.51.3

The College Hill Park Bathhouse is significant as an excellent representative of the numerous New Deal work relief projects that were implemented in Wichita's parks system. The work relief programs implemented by the Roosevelt administration provided much needed jobs for the unemployed of the city – from artists to writers, engineers to construction workers, and men, women and youth alike. The WPA program was designed to put a large number of people to work on "small useful projects." In many other Kansas communities, WPA projects are relatively simple due to the lack of local resources available for planning. In Wichita, however, a professionally staffed parks department utilized these federal programs to implement their plans for a cohesive parks system. In the case of College Hill Park, the undeveloped land was transformed into a park in the 1930s with WPA funds and labor. As with other New Deal

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programs, putting unemployed people to work on civic projects was not without its critics. For for the citizens of Wichita, however, the physical results of Roosevelt's New Deal would not only serve as tangible reminders of his experiment, but would be used and enjoyed for decades. The bathhouse is thus significant under Criterion A in the area of **Social History** as a good example of a WPA construction project in Wichita which provided relief through jobs for the unemployed of the city during the Great Depression.

The bathhouse is also significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent example of a style, Spanish Colonial Revival, as applied to a park building, and as a good example of the work of Wichita architect Edward Forsblom. Unlike other smaller Kansas communities, Wichita was able to draw upon a community of professional architects for the design of its WPA projects. In some instances, the parks department used plans previously prepared for projects that were languishing due to the Depression. Some of these plans had to be modified in a concession to the economic conditions. The originally proposed flagstone material for floors for the shelter house in North Linwood Park was changed to poured concrete, for example. In general, though, the materials and design for Wichita's WPA park projects represents a higher standard than is typically associated with this work relief program. The design for the bathhouse at the new College Hill Park is an excellent example of the high standards set for Wichita's parks. As noted by the Wichita Eagle in an article discussing the pool's dedication ceremony, the pool and bathhouse represented "the last word in design and construction."⁴⁴ It bears little evidence of "scaling back" in plans due to the Depression, but instead is designed to complement the adjoining upper class neighborhood. Upon closer examination, however, there is a general lack of "extra" ornamentation; instead basic features of the building, such as the arcaded porch set between the front wings, are used as part of the character-defining features of the style. The skills of Wichita architect Edward Forsblom are evident; in lesser hands, or if designed by the regional engineer of the WPA, it is likely this building would have been less successful in terms of its integration with the neighborhood.

Edward Forsblom (1875 to 1961) joined the Wichita architectural firm of Charles W. Terry in 1906 and eventually took over the firm. Forsblom purchased the business in 1916 and Terry moved to California soon after. The firm was later known as Forsblom and Parks. Although his business was undoubtedly affected by the Depression, especially when compared to the boom years of the 1920s, Forsblom received commissions to design several New Deal projects. The

⁴⁴Ibid.

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largest project was the new library at the Municipal University of Wichita, funded by the Public Works Administration. He also prepared several plans for the city's parks department, including the McKinley Park Shelter House, the McLean Memorial Fountain, the Linwood Park Shelter House, and others which are now demolished. All of these projects were paid for by New Deal agencies. Each of the above shelter houses were designed in a different style, although they utilized the same basic H-plan as the College Hill Bathhouse.

The College Hill Bathhouse is also significant as a good example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style as applied to a utilitarian park building. It exhibits the distinctive characteristics of the style, including a low-pitched roof with virtually no overhang, a red tile roof covering, an arcade supported by columns, molded capitals, arched window openings, grills on windows, and an enriched door surround.⁴⁵ The concession to the Depression is likely the lack of ornate low-relief carvings; instead, the fenestration lintels and arcade arches are demarcated with radiating arched youssoirs of vertical brick stretchers.

⁴⁵John J.-G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History: 1981) 9.

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http://specialcollections.wichita.edu/collections/local_history/tihen/index.asp
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16 February 1937, p. 12.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 7-26, Merriman Park 6th Place Addition; Wichita; Sedgwick County; Kansas.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The property's boundaries encompass only those lots which include the bathhouse, pool, and pumphouse. The tract listed in the verbal boundary description above includes the features necessary to provide historic feeling and association. A 2003 inventory of College Hill Park focused on the built structures, and did not provide National Register eligibility evaluation for the entire College Hill Park including landscape features.

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The following information applies to photograph 1:

Photographer:

Unknown

Date of photograph:

ca. 1937

Description of View:

Historic photo, looking northwest during construction

Location of original photo: Wichita Public Library, Local History Section-Wichita Parks

Collection; 223 S. Main; Wichita, KS 67202

The following information applies to photographs 2-8:

Photographer:

Deon Wolfenbarger

The following information applies to photograph 9:

Photographer:

Kathy Morgan

The following information applies to photographs 2-9:

Location of

negative:

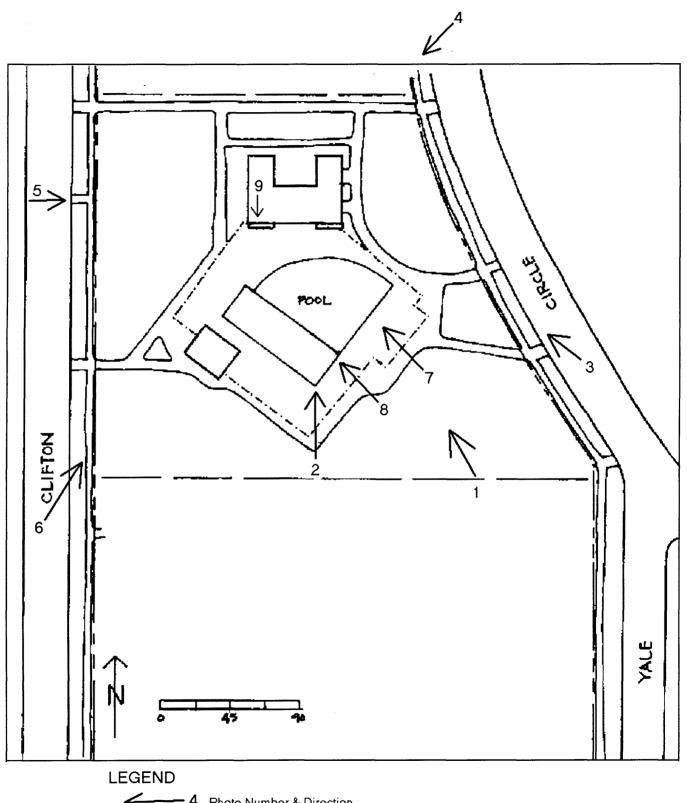
Wichita-Sedgwick County Metropolitan Area Planning

Department; City Hall, 10th floor; 455 N. Main; Wichita, Kansas

67202-1688

Phot	o# Date	Description of View
2.	6/28/2006	Looking north at front of bathhouse
3.	6/28/2006	Looking northwest at front and east elevation of bathhouse
4.	6/28/2006	Looking southwest at rear of bathhouse
5.	1/31/2006	Looking east at west elevation of bathhouse
6.	1/31/2006	Looking northeast at pumphouse and bathhouse
7.	6/28/2006	Looking northwest at front arcade of bathhouse
8.	6/28/2006	Looking northwest at front windows on west end of bathhouse

College Hill Park Bathhouse Site Map



- 4 Photo Number & Direction

