

PH0503681

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED SEP 7 1977

DATE ENTERED

OCT 11 1977

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Baker Municipal Natatorium

AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 2470 Grove Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN Baker VICINITY OF 2nd CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE Oregon CODE 41 COUNTY Baker CODE 001

**CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME City of Baker

STREET & NUMBER Baker City Hall

CITY, TOWN Baker VICINITY OF STATE Oregon 97814

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Baker County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Baker STATE Oregon 97814

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Statewide Inventory of Historic Properties

DATE 1976 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS State Parks and Recreation Branch, 525 Trade Street SE

CITY, TOWN Salem STATE Oregon 97310

# 7 DESCRIPTION

<b>CONDITION</b>		<b>CHECK ONE</b>	<b>CHECK ONE</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Baker Municipal Natatorium is a timber-framed, two-story brick structure with gable roof and is oriented longitudinally on a 185 x 250-foot parcel bounded by Grove, Campbell and East Streets. Its basic dimensions are 100 x 200 feet. Its modified cruciform plan incorporates short arms at the west, or entrance end fronting Geiser-Pollman City Park. A single story unit approximately 20 feet in width projects the length of the swimming pool stem on the south elevation.

Centered in the central pavilion of the front elevation is a double piazza recessed behind the wall plane. The triangular-arched, two-story portal is set off by a projecting framework surmounted by a concrete hood molding which echoes the configuration of the parapet above. Except for the fact that they contain circular ventilation openings and have no porches, the rear wall of the stem and gable ends of the cross-axial wing are similarly composed. Wide piers separate window bays of paired double-hung windows with six lights per sash. Spandrels between stories are slightly recessed. A concrete foundation, which is exposed about two feet above grade, window sills, second story lintels treated as a continuous belt course, and wall copings form contrasting horizontal accents against red-orange brick. The continuous belt course is, in effect, a bond beam which supports the upper walls and roof.

Originally, dressing rooms, rest rooms, baths, lounges and administrative offices were located on the ground floor of the cross-axial wing. Above these spaces was one large auditorium space with a vaulted plaster ceiling which was used for plays and dances. The swimming pool occupied the stem of the building. A balcony connected with the auditorium and encompassed the swimming pool space on three sides. The balcony and a cantilevered roof truss system are supported by 10 x 12-inch timber columns.

Because it is taught-surfaced and utilitarian, with minimal dependence on period architecture, the building is difficult to classify in stylistic terms. The treatment of the upper walls, with caps which are raised into blocks at the peaks of gables, is suggestive of the Jacobethan Revival Style. Possibly, more appropriate as a stylistic definition is American functionalism, a term proposed by Professor Marion Ross, Head of the Department of Art History, University of Oregon School of Architecture and Allied Arts.

The environment of the Natatorium as undergone some change since 1920, but the building's essential relationship to Geiser-Pollman Park across Grove Street is intact. Campbell Street, which borders the north side of the Natatorium, is the main link between Baker's downtown core and Interstate-80. Opposite the Natatorium, across Campbell Street, is the Community Center. Also nearby are the Leo Adler baseball field, the 4-H Building, Armory, Rodeo Arena, and a new Public Library. Well-maintained older residences occupy the remainder of the immediate neighborhood.

Sidewalks surrounding the Natatorium are in need of repair. Brick exterior walls are in good condition, generally, although cleaning and some tuck-pointing are required. Clogged roof drains and resulting winter ice dams have caused displacement of the parapet in the southwest and northeast corners. Windows are temporarily shielded by plywood until such time as restoration is completed by the County-appointed Baker Museum Commission and the building is opened as a regional history museum. The Baker County Historical Society and the Museum Commission operate the property under a lease agreement with the City of Baker. Terms of the agreement are to be reviewed in January 1978.

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With the exception of the pool, which was filled in during the Second World War, the building's interior is intact. However, some damage has resulted from years of neglected roof maintenance. All plaster surfaces are deteriorated somewhat. Much of the wood flooring of the balcony and auditorium is buckled, and some subfloor<sup>ing</sup> and floor joists of the balcony are damaged. Several rotted bases of the timber posts have been removed, the columns properly aligned and set upon new concrete footings reinforced with steel. A re-roofing project was completed within the past year in which the built-up and rolled metal roof was replaced by corrugated galvanized steel.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW					
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				Recreation

SPECIFIC DATES 1920

~~XXXXXX~~ BUILDER/ARCHITECT M. P. White

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Baker Municipal Natatorium is significant to Baker as a component of the first major park development undertaken by the City following the First World War. It was among the largest brick buildings of its period in the region and was designed in a functional style with certain suggestions of the Jacobethan Revival by leading local architect M. P. White.

LETSONUS

Michael P. White (1864-1929), pioneer architect and builder of Baker, was a native of Cardiff, Wales. He was educated in Cardiff and at Liverpool, England before coming to Baker at the age of eighteen to join an older brother. The first city directory for Baker was a directory for nearly all of Eastern Oregon and was printed for the years 1899-1900. In it M. P. White was listed as a contractor. Prior to that time he is known to have operated a brick yard. Beginning in 1903, he was listed in the Baker City Directory as an architect.

In 1920, the year that the Natatorium was under construction, there were four architects listed in the Baker City Directory. In addition to White, they were H. W. Bond, E. A. Jerome, and R. G. Parker. Three of the local architects submitted plans for the Natatorium project, and R. P. Bailey, a Portland architect, also competed for the commission.

White is reported to have built the old high school building, now known as the Central School, when he was twenty-four years of age. Subsequently he designed and constructed a notable number of the city's important buildings. Among these were the first St. Elizabeth Hospital, the old St. Elizabeth Hospital (now a nursing home), St. Francis Cathedral, the Knights of Pythias Building, Bishop's Episcopal residence, North Baker School, the White Apartments, the Sommer, Eagles and Shoemaker Buildings, Palmer Brothers Jewlery Store, Basche-Sage Hardware Company store, and many residences. All of the public buildings, with the exception of the original St. Elizabeth Hospital, are still in use.

Baker is a town of 9,500 population situated in the south end of the Powder River Valley. Historically, its economy has been based on mining, lumbering and cattle. The Oregon Cattlemen's Association was organized in Baker, and its first president was William Pollman of Baker, who was honored by the naming of Geiser-Pollman Park. Once a small mining camp and stage station on the old Oregon Trail, Baker had developed into a modern city by 1900. It had become an important wholesale center in the Inland Empire. Salesmen made their headquarters there and traveled to and fro by narrow-gauge railroad, the Oregon Short Line Railroad, or by automobile. Eastern capitalists arrived by Union Pacific Railroad to inspect their investments. Cultural life was enhanced by literary societies and was reflected in the imposing Warshauer Hotel, an opera house, and many substantial residences.

(continued)

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Eastern Oregon Directories 1899 and 1900. Regarding M. P. White, architect.  
 Baker City Directories 1903 and 1920. Regarding M. P. White, architect.  
 Baker County Records (May 1929). Regarding M. P. White, architect.  
 Correspondence from Helen Lussier, daughter of M. P. White, architect, Portland, Oregon  
 May 16, 1977.  
 Baker Democrat Herald (May 6, 1929), 1; (May 7, 1929), 2. Regarding M. P. White, architect

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

(continued)

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.06 acres (46,250 sq. ft.)

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,1	4,3,4	7,9,3	4,9	5,8	8,2,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING				
C							D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 1, through 5, Block 7, J. P. Atwood's Addition to the Plat of Baker; and Vine Street, vacated, adjacent to said parcel on the south.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Betty Kuhl, Secretary, in cooperation with Henry Levinger, Chairman, Dallas Hoopes, architect, and Byron Brinton.

ORGANIZATION Baker County Museum Commission DATE April 13, 1977

STREET & NUMBER Route 1, Box 218 TELEPHONE (503) 523-2418

CITY OR TOWN Baker STATE Oregon 97814

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL      STATE      LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE [Signature]  
 TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer DATE August 26, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	DATE <u>10/17/77</u>
ATTEST <u>[Signature]</u>	KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	DATE <u>10/17/77</u>

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On July 21, 1919 the City of Baker adopted Ordinance No. 1783, which provided for acquisition of additional park and recreation grounds and specifically called for construction of a municipal natatorium. The latter was to be supplied with naturally-heated water diverted from nearby Samo Springs. Voters approved a special bond issue in 1920, and the facility was opened for use in 1921. An order for 275,000 brick had been filled by the Eastern Oregon Brick Company of LaGrande in neighboring Union County.

The Olympic-size swimming pool of the Natatorium purportedly was the scene of Oregon's first water ballet. Hundreds of Baker citizens learned to swim during the American Red Cross classes held there. In addition to the swimming activities supervised by pool manager and swim instructor Archie Murray, the Natatorium housed an annual auto show and dances. The traditional Winter Snowball was for many years the highlight of Baker's social calendar. Roller skating was permitted on the wide balcony surrounding the pool. In this way, the Natatorium operated as a primary recreation center in the community over a period of twenty years.

In 1941 the property was leased by the City to Baker Wood Products Corporation. The pool was filled in with crushed rock, and the main space was used for the manufacture of truck bodies and ammunition boxes for the Armed Forces. A National Guard Unit was formed in Baker in September 1947, and the Natatorium became its drill facility until 1949. Night classes in wood-working and cabinet making were taught at the "Nat" by Glenn Wolfe and Harvey Witham for the benefit of servicemen returning from the Second World War in need of marketable skills.

In the Post War era the Jaycees used the Natatorium for a meeting place and social hall. A livestock show for Juniors was regularly held there, and, subsequently, the City used the main floor for a garage & workshop, which contributed further to the building's deterioration. Periodically, land-use pressures caused talk of demolishing the building. Finally, however, in December 1972 the Baker County Court appointed a County Museum Commission to develop a feasible plan for maintenance and operation of the unoccupied building. Clean-up projects by volunteers followed. More recently, interior post footings have been rebuilt and a new roof added. The City has leased the Natatorium to the Baker County Historical Society until January 1978, at which time it is expected that an acceptable adaptive re-use program will be ready for implementation.

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Baker City Centennial Album (Baker, Oregon, 1974).

Minutes of the Baker City Council Meeting, July 21, 1919.

Baker Morning Democrat (April 6, 1921).

Rand, Helen, Gold, Jade and Elegance (Baker, Oregon: Record Courier, 1974).

Miscellaneous articles, Baker Record Courier, 1973-1977.

Miscellaneous articles, Baker Bedrock Democrat, 1919-1921.