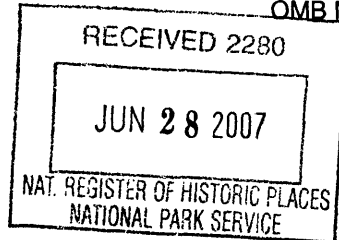


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



789

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 Willow Creek Park

other names/site number 5PW.56

2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by Memorial Drive, Parkview Ave. & Willow Valley Rd. [N/A] not for publication

city or town Lamar [N/A] vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Prowers code 099 zip code 81052

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 [X] 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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title: Mark Wolfe, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer; Date: 6/18/07

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- [X] 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.

Signature of the Keeper: Edson H. Beall; Date of Action: 8-7-07

Willow Creek Park  
Name of Property

Prowers County, Colorado  
County/State

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not count previously listed resources.)		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	buildings
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing.**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
New Deal Resources on Colorado's Eastern Plains

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.**  
0

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Function (Enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>LANDSCAPE/ Park</u>	<u>LANDSCAPE/ Park</u>
<u>RECREATION AND CULTURE/ Outdoor</u>	<u>RECREATION AND CULTURE/ Outdoor</u>
<u>Recreation</u>	<u>Recreation</u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century American</u>	foundation <u>Sandstone</u>
<u>Movements</u>	walls <u>Sandstone</u>
<u>Other: WPA Rustic</u>	roof <u>Asphalt</u>
<u> </u>	other <u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>

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

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Willow Creek Park  
Prowers County, Colorado

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## DESCRIPTION

Willow Creek Park is located in the southeastern part of Lamar in a residential area that was developed after the park was constructed. The long, rectilinear park measures approximately 2382 x 502 feet. The roughly 28-acre park is bordered by Parkview Avenue on the west, Memorial Drive on the south, and Willow Valley Road on the east. A parking lot for a modern municipal swimming pool is located at the northern boundary; a stone wall marks the boundary between the parking lot and the park.

The park is naturalistic in design, without any elaborate landscaping plans, reflecting the functionality of work done by New Deal agencies. Willow Creek runs through the center of the park, dividing it into west and east sections. Numerous large deciduous shade and evergreen trees are scattered along the lawns on the western and eastern edges of the park. The Willow Creek flood plain is open without any of the trees or stone features found elsewhere in the park. A modern wooden pedestrian bridge (2003) connects the two sides of the park.

Historic features on the western side of the park include stone walls, the "colonette" (a semi-circular stone seating area), the Shelter House, and an outdoor fireplace. A non-historic picnic shelter and restroom are also located on this side. Historic features on the eastern side of the park include Pike's Tower, the Caretaker's Cottage, the Boy Scout Kiva, and stone walls. Non-historic volleyball courts (2), a restroom, a picnic shelter, and a playground are located on this side.

There are two main vehicular circulation systems -- one on each side of the park. On the western side of the park, there is a dead-end, roughly 600' dirt and gravel drive. The drive enters the park at the intersection of Parkview Avenue and Parkway Drive at the northwest corner of the park and then runs southeast towards Willow Creek. From this drive, cars can turn east to circle around the colonette. At the floodplain, cars can turn north to drive on a dirt road running along the east side of the stone wall defining the western side of the park and then enter the circular drive just north of the Shelter House. Southwest of the colonette, a section of the road is widened to create a parking area. On the eastern side of the park, a roughly 1850' curvilinear paved asphalt drive runs from the northeast edge of the park, through the eastern side, to the southern edge of the park. This drive connects Willow Valley Road to Memorial Drive and includes a large loop between the Caretaker's House and Pike's Tower. The section of road adjacent to Pike's Tower has been widened to create a parking area.

There are 17 resources within Willow Creek Park of which 8 are contributing and 9 are non-contributing. The park site, including the creek, lawns, trees and circulation plan, is considered as one resource. Impermanent resources, such as the movable metal picnic tables scattered around the park, are not included in the count.

### *Contributing Resources*

#### **Willow Creek Park Site, 1933-1938**

The Willow Creek Park site is counted as one contributing site, with integral or smaller park elements considered as features of the site and not included in the count of contributing and non-contributing resources. The park was the work of three New Deal agencies: created by the Civil Works Administration (CWA) in 1933 to 1934 and then further developed under Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects from 1934 to 1938.

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The park is rectilinear in plan. There are grassy lawns dotted with tall deciduous and evergreen trees at the northwest and southeast sections of the park. Park staff estimates that around 80 percent of the trees in the park are original. Some new trees are planted each year to replace trees that die and to keep a mix of different species and ages in the park. Willow Creek cuts through the middle of the park from the northeast to the south, creating a large flood plain that divides the park. The New Deal projects in the park created a series of dams on the creek, creating a central water feature in the park, but these were destroyed in a flood in 1965. The circulation patterns on the west and east sides of the park are original, lined by stone walls constructed by the CWA and WPA, but the flood damage destroyed the original linkage between the two sides. In 2003 a wood pedestrian bridge was constructed to link the west and east sides.

**Caretaker's House, 1936 (Photographs 10-13).**

Constructed by the WPA in 1936, the Caretaker's House is located on the eastern edge of the park. It is set at an angle and faces northwest. The irregularly planned house is a single-story with a partially exposed basement; the levels of the front section are offset from the rear. The flat roof is covered with built-up roofing materials. Built in the Rustic Style, it is constructed of irregularly shaped and sized slab-rock masonry. The randomly laid stones are multi-colored in red and brown hues. This stone is quite different from the blocks of tan sandstone used for the CWA structures in the park. The stonework is also more refined and skilled than the CWA stonework. The house also incorporates Pueblo Revival Style elements through its wood vigas. Park caretakers lived in the building until 1986. The building is currently used for Girl Scout meetings.

The house consists of a rear (southeast) rectangular section (measuring 16' x 39') and a front (northwest) rectangular section (measuring 19' x 27') that is set at a right angle to the rear section. A greenhouse is attached to the southwest side of rear section. The building foundation is stone. Windows are single or paired 6-over-6 wood-sash set within deeply recessed openings featuring slab-rock slanting sills. The rear section is slightly taller than the front section. A roof deck is located on the front section. Stone stairs are located at the north corner of the building (photo 11). The stairs are freestanding until they reach the northwest side of the rear section where they turn and continue up the northwest wall of the rear section to reach the roof of the front section. The roof of the front section has a parapet wall on the northwest and stone pillars connected by a metal rail balustrade on the northeast and southwest sides. The rear section has parapet walls on the northwest, northeast, and southwest sides (see detail map).

The entrance is centered on the northwest wall of the front section (photo 10). A flagstone path with several steps leads to the front entrance. Three semi-circular steps constructed of ashlar blocks lead up to the front door. The single door is wood covered by a newer screen door. Single windows are located on either side of the door. There is a paired window on the northeast side of the front section; a single and a paired window are located on the southwest side. Wood vigas extend across the front section, protruding on the northeast and southwest sides.

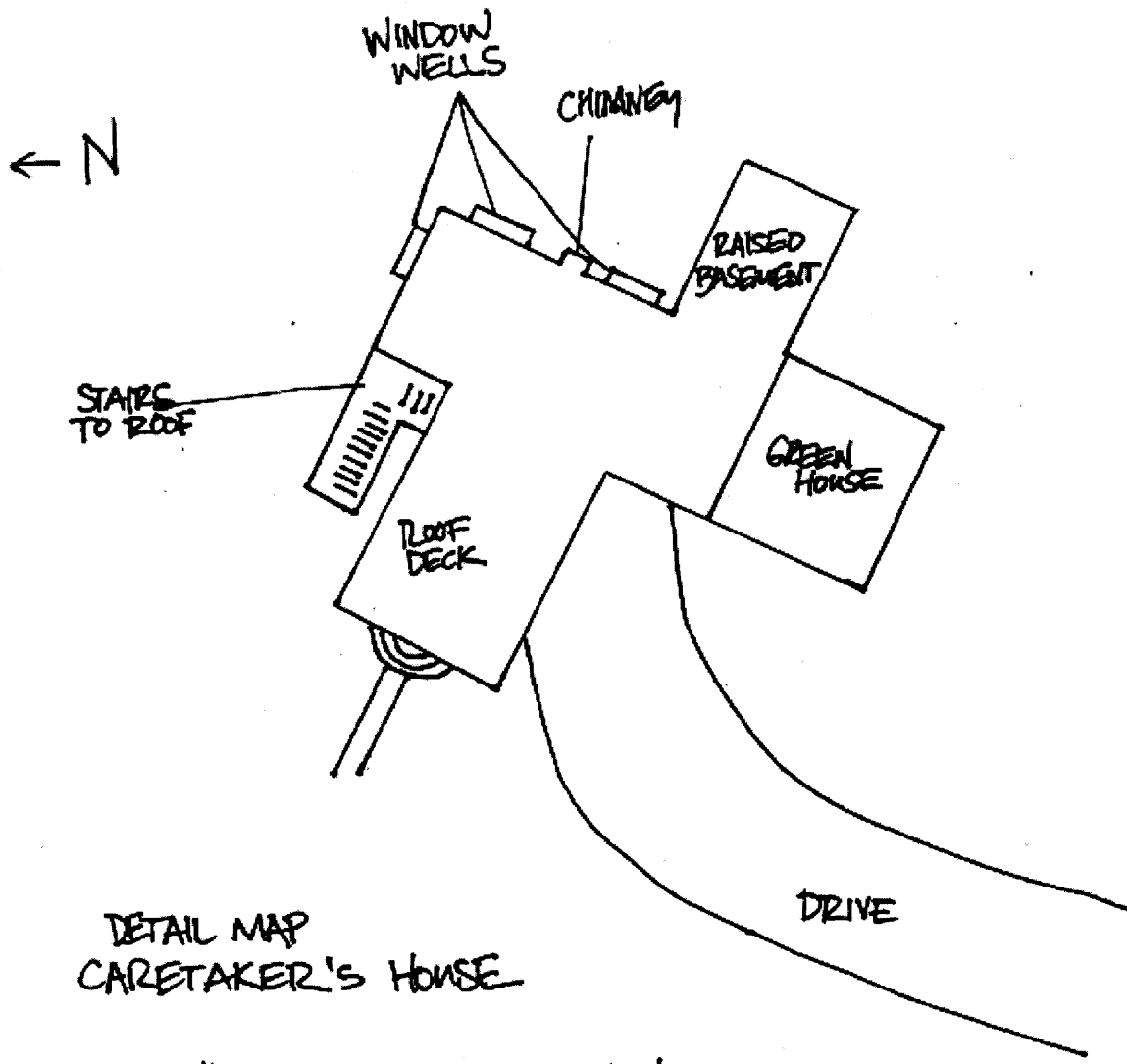
Another entrance is located on the northwest side of the rear section, through a wooden sliding garage door (photo 13). A paired window is located above the door. On the northeast side there are paired windows at the main level and basement level. The basement level window extends below grade with a window well. On the southeast (rear) side there are a single window, a paired window, and a smaller 1-over-1 wood-frame sash window on the main level (photo 12). There are two paired windows with window wells at the basement level. An exterior chimney is located near the center of the southeast side. A raised basement section (measuring 12' x 18') extending east from the south corner of the

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building is comprised of a 4' stone wall with concrete roof; this covers a basement room. The greenhouse (measuring 16' x 18') sits slightly below grade and has a gabled asphalt roof. A curving gravel drive with a low stone retaining wall leads from the park drive to the southwest side of building.



DETAIL MAP  
CARETAKER'S HOUSE

NOT TO SCALE      12/12/2005

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**Shelter House, 1933-1934 (Photographs 5-6).**

Located in the western section of the park, east of the colonette, the Shelter House was constructed during a CWA project that began in November 1933 and was completed in March 1934. The Shelter House (measuring 16' x 29') is constructed of roughly finished, natural-faced sandstone blocks of varying sizes. Most the stones are laid in regular courses of varying heights but some sections feature square rubble masonry. The Shelter House has a stone foundation and a built-up shed roof that slopes very slightly towards the rear. Low parapet walls are located on the front and sides on the building. Wood vigas originally extended out from the west and east sides, but only the vigas on the east side survive. An exterior chimney centered on the west side is flanked by two windows opening on either side—one small and one large. The openings have been boarded over. There is a garage door on the south, a pair of windows on the east, and two openings infilled with stone on the east and north. Located on the south side are double metal doors and a door opening that has been infilled with stone. On the east side are paired 1-over-1, wood sash windows that have lost their glass and been boarded from the inside. Metal grates cover the openings. Door openings infilled with stone are also located on the east and north sides.

**Stone walls, 1933-1938 (Photographs 1, 2, 14, 18).**

Stone walls are located in the western and eastern sections of the park. The construction of stone walls is mentioned in both the CWA and WPA plans for the park. Low stone walls line the drives through the park as well as portions of the north and south park boundaries. Most of the walls are constructed of randomly laid, irregularly-shaped, natural-faced sandstone. The rock walls have an uneven top surface without any type of coping. According to historic photos, this appears to have been the original design. The simple design reflects the fact that most of the work was done by laborers with no masonry experience that were learning on the job. However, the square posts framing the northwest entrance of the park feature quarry-faced ashlar blocks laid in regular courses (photo 1). Historic photos indicate that these posts were one of the first features constructed at the park. A more elaborate stone wall is also located along the south wall of the park, just east of Pike's Tower (photo 18). This wall also has quarry-faced, ashlar blocks laid in regular courses. This section of wall features six, square stone posts which rise above a stone retaining wall.

**Colonette, 1933-1934 (Photograph 3).**

The Colonette, located in the western section of the park, was constructed during a CWA project that began in November 1933 and was completed in March 1934. R. L. Christy, an amateur historian who prepared the initial plans for the park, used the term "colonette" to describe this semi-circular stone structure, as did contemporaneous newspaper articles. It is unclear why Christy chose this word, as a colonette is a miniature column.

The Colonette lies west of the Shelter House, and a dirt vehicular drive circles around it. The Colonette is roughly 90-feet long. It features two long benches on the east side, the bases of which are constructed of natural-faced, regularly-coursed ashlar. The bench backs are constructed of upright slab-rock masonry that rises towards the center. The center section separates the two benches and features a wall of larger stone blocks topped by an iron gate. The benches face east towards Willow Creek and may have been originally designed as seating from which to admire the park's central water features.

**Fireplace, 1933-1938 (Photograph 4).**

The Fireplace is located in the western section of the park, south of the Colonette. It is not clear which agency constructed this fireplace since there are references to the CWA and WPA constructing

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fireplaces in the park. A description of the park from 1937 mentions 10 fireplaces located within the park, including those at the Shelter House and Kiva. The location of the other fireplaces is not known; if they were placed closer to the creek they may have been destroyed during the flood of 1965. The Fireplace features a central fire pit topped by a tall rectangular wall composed of several large slabs of stone pieced together and roughly mortared. Extending at right angles from the fireplace are two low benches. The base, seat, and back of the benches are constructed of flat, rectangular sandstone slabs. The benches face east towards Willow Creek and may have been originally designed as a seating from which to admire the park's central water features.

**Boy Scout Kiva, 1934 (Photograph 8).**

Constructed in 1934 according to its stone plaque, the Boy Scout Kiva is located in the eastern section of the park. The CWA apparently built it to be used for Boy Scout meetings. The Boy Scout Kiva is a semi-circular amphitheater with a tall fireplace at the center. It measures roughly 50' x 50' across and deep. There are four levels of seating that curve out from the fireplace. They are constructed of large, roughly rectangular sandstone slabs. The central fireplace is constructed of smaller, roughly shaped, sandstone blocks laid in heavy mortar. Centered on the fireplace chimney is a stone plaque carved with "B.S.A. KIVA BE PREPARED 1934." A flagstone patio extends west from the Kiva.

Traditionally, a kiva is a cylindrically-shaped underground room used by the Pueblo peoples for religious ceremonies. The Boy Scouts have adopted the term to refer to sites with semi-circular rows of seating used for meetings and ceremonies. There have been other Boy Scout "kivas" in southeastern Colorado. In 1933, a group of Boy Scouts in La Junta established the famous Koshare Indian Dancers. The WPA constructed a round "kiva" room in 1935 for these scouts. No longer extant, the Pueblo Revival style building sat on La Junta's courthouse square. The Boy Scouts continue to hold performances in another "kiva"—the Koshare Kiva, built in 1949, which is now part of the Koshare Indian Museum.

**Pike's Tower, 1937-1938 (Photographs 15, 16).**

The WPA constructed Pike's Tower, which is located in the eastern section of the park. The tower was the idea of Lamar resident R.L. Christy, an amateur historian who prepared the initial plans for the park. Christy had studied Zebulon Pike's trip across Colorado and designed the tower to commemorate Pike's expedition. On 13 November 1806, Pike and his men camped on Willow Creek near the location of present-day Lamar. Christy placed the tower on what he believed was Pike's camp site; however, no definitive proof of this claim has been found.

The 40' tall, Rustic Style observation tower, is located at the southeast entrance to the park. The structure is constructed of quarry-faced, randomly-sized ashlar blocks. The stone is regularly coursed, though the courses vary in height. The tower has a more finished or "dressed" appearance than the rest of the masonry work in Willow Creek Park. Its exterior dimensions are approximately 31'x17'; this includes a wide set of stone entry steps on the east side which leads to a patio. From the patio, exterior stairs then wrap around the south, west, and north sides of the tower. A stepped stone wall frames the stairs that lead to an observation platform. The stone walls rise up at the four corners creating square posts that support a hipped roof with exposed rafter tails that covers the observation platform. Three tall, linear recessed openings in the masonry mark the east elevation of the tower.

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*Non-contributing Resources*

The following resources are non-contributing due to their construction after the period of significance.

**Picnic Shelters (2)**, 1995 and 2002 (Photograph 2).

There are two picnic shelters located in the park. The shelter (2002) on the western side is located near the northern edge of the park; the shelter (1995) on the eastern side is located west of the Caretaker's House near the playground. The western shelter is roughly 30' x 60' and the eastern shelter is roughly 15' x 30'. The shelters are very simple structures consisting of a rectangular concrete pad covered with a metal gabled roof that is supported by six metal posts.

**Bridge**, 2003 (Photograph 19).

The bridge crosses Willow Creek near the middle of the park, west of the Caretaker's House. The bridge is the only link between the two sides of the park. The original park design is believed to have included a series of dams and bridges across Willow Creek, but these were destroyed in a major flood in 1965. The current pedestrian bridge is very simple and functional in design. The bridge is approximately 30' x 10'. The bridge has a wood deck and a tall railing composed of vertical wood boards topped by a single vertical board.

**Volleyball Courts (2)**, 2000 (Photographs 7, 17).

The volleyball courts are located on the eastern side of the park. One is located northwest of the Caretaker's House and the other is located southwest of the Caretaker's House, near the playground. The volleyball courts consist of a sand court contained by wood logs with a volleyball net at the center.

**Playground**, 1995 (Photograph 14).

The playground is located on the eastern side of the park, southwest of the Caretaker's House. The playground features a large metal and plastic play structure including various steps, bridges, and slides located on a graveled lot.

**Restrooms (2)**, ca. 1960-1980 (Photographs 1, 17).

There are two restrooms located in the park. One is on the western side, southwest of the colonette. The other is on the eastern side, north of Pike's Tower. Both restrooms are small, square buildings constructed of concrete blocks resting on a concrete foundation. The restrooms are approximately 30' x 30'. The blocks are tinted a reddish-brown color. The buildings are topped by wood-framed gable roofs covered with asphalt shingles. The gable ends are filled with wood panels painted white. The exact construction date of the restrooms is not known. Since they are identical in design, they appear to have been constructed at the same time. The design of the buildings suggests they were constructed sometime after 1960. The fact that the facilities manager for the park was unable to find a record of their construction (while records for more recent buildings were readily available) suggests that they were constructed at least a couple decades ago.

**Garage**, circa 1980s (Photograph 12).

The garage is located on the eastern side of the park, southeast of the Caretaker's House. The small (approximately 30' x 15'), frame building rests on a concrete foundation and has masonite siding and an asphalt-shingled gabled roof.



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*Integrity*

The most significant change in the park is the loss of the historic water features due to flood damage. Floods have been a chronic problem. Part of the original plan for the park was to address flooding. The first lake constructed in the park was destroyed by a flood during park construction. The drainage in the park was then redone and included several rock-lined pools created by a series of dams. A major flood in 1965 destroyed the water features, landscaping, and structures in the low-lying center of the park. Among the water features that did not survive were two lily ponds, a wading pool, and a chain of five ponds connected by falls. Though the floods destroyed any plantings immediately adjacent to the creek bank, the plantings in the rest of the park have fared well.

The majority of the remaining original stone features are intact. New construction within the park is functional and part of the park's evolving use. While non-contributing resources outnumber contributing, the contributing resources are visually dominant. The simple, unobtrusive design of the new structures help them blend into the background when one is standing nearby and the many mature trees located in the park help screen them when viewing from a distance. New construction in the eastern portion of the park includes a restroom building, picnic shelter, two volleyball courts, and a large playground area. New construction in the west section includes a restroom building, picnic shelter, and playground equipment.

The park was designed for automobile traffic and the original circulation pattern through the park is intact on the western and eastern sides of the park with the original stone walls lining the drives. The original circulation plan has been lost at the center of the park and it is unclear exactly how the two sections were connected before the flood. The extant stone resources have a high degree of integrity. The Shelter House is the only resource to have been significantly modified from its original appearance, with missing *vigas* and several openings in-filled with stone. However, it still retains enough integrity to be a good example of CWA Rustic stone construction. It is especially interesting to be able to compare the very rough appearance of the Shelter House (the first building constructed at the park) with the much more finished appearance of the Caretaker's House and Pike's Tower, constructed several years later by the WPA. These WPA buildings and structures retain an exceptionally high degree of integrity and show the development of masonry craftsmanship at Willow Creek Park during its construction. The park also has several stone features (Colonette, Fireplace, and Boy Scout Kiva) which retain their integrity and are excellent examples of the Rustic stone features characteristic of New Deal park design.

Because of the significant loss of integrity in water features and moderate loss of integrity in the circulation system due to the missing links between the western and eastern sections, the park is not nominated for Landscape Architecture. Instead it is nominated under Architecture for its collection of Rustic stone buildings and structures. Though the loss of the water features has affected the setting of the masonry features, the Rustic stonework in the park retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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 Prowers County, Colorado

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**List of Resources within the District**

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Year Built</b>	<b>Resource Type</b>	<b>Contributing Status</b>
Park	1933-1938	Site	Contributing
Caretaker's House	1936	Building	Contributing
Shelter House	1933-1934	Building	Contributing
Stone Walls	1933-1938	Structure	Contributing
Colonette	1933-1934	Structure	Contributing
Fireplace	1933-1938	Structure	Contributing
Boy Scout Kiva	1934	Structure	Contributing
Pike's Tower	1937-1938	Structure	Contributing
Restrooms (2)	Circa 1960-1980	Building	Non-contributing
Garage	1980s	Building	Non-contributing
Picnic Shelters (2)	1995, 2002	Structure	Non-contributing
Bridge	2003	Structure	Non-contributing
Playground	1995	Structure	Non-contributing
Volleyball Courts (2)	2000	Structure	Non-contributing

Willow Creek Park  
Name of Property

Prowers County, Colorado  
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.)

- 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)

Social History

Entertainment/Recreation

Architecture

### Periods of Significance

1933-1957

### Significant Dates

1933

1938

### Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Civil Works Administration

Federal Emergency Relief Administration

Works Progress Administration

### Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Colorado Historical Society

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
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## SIGNIFICANCE

Willow Creek Park, constructed between 1933 and 1938 under the Civil Works Administration (CWA), Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and Works Progress Administration (WPA), is being nominated under the *New Deal Resources of Colorado's Eastern Plains Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF)*. Willow Creek Park meets the registration requirements of one property types delineated in the MPDF—*Recreational & Cultural Resources (subtype: Parks)*.

Willow Creek Park meets Criterion A for its significance in the area of Social History for its association with President Franklin Roosevelt's legislative agenda to rescue the United States from the Great Depression. This agenda included the creation of an unprecedented number of policies, programs, and agencies to provide relief, employment, conserve natural resources, and assist in construction of public works—all with the greater goal of stimulating the devastated economy. Constructed by the CWA, FERA, and WPA, Willow Creek Park presents an important record of the federal relief programs administered in Colorado's eastern plains during the Great Depression. Although all of Colorado was affected by the dire economic conditions of the 1930s, the agricultural-based economy of the eastern plains was especially hard hit due to the drought conditions that led to the Dust Bowl. The park was constructed over six years, providing a source of employment in Lamar for much of the Great Depression. The New Deal construction programs emphasized projects providing civic, educational, and health benefits for a community, and a large number of projects were related to recreation, athletics, and health. During these difficult times, New Deal agencies also recognized the psychological benefits of recreational and cultural activities. Through several New Deal programs, life in Lamar was enhanced through the conversion of a barren field into a welcoming park that was a place of pride for the community. Willow Creek Park is also significant as Colorado's first CWA project.

Willow Creek Park also meets Criterion A for its significance in the area of Entertainment/ Recreation as it was the first planned park in Lamar. The CWA application stated, "the park when completed will be of great benefit to the community as there is no other recreation center within a radius of twenty miles." It provided a vital morale boost to a community suffering during the Depression. According to *The WPA Worker*:

Because of the parks and playgrounds built by the WPA, millions of people who can't afford to belong to country clubs can now swim and play golf, tennis and other healthful outdoor games. . . . Eighty percent of the distressed people whom the WPA must employ are unskilled, yet suited to the building of recreational and sport facilities. That is why a large part of WPA's effort now goes to building and improving parks and playgrounds, swimming pools, gymnasiums and amphitheatres.

From construction to the present, the park has provided a location for physical recreation as well as passive recreation such as picnics. The park remains a prominent feature of the city of Lamar.

The park meets Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an example of Rustic architecture as constructed by the CWA, FERA, and WPA. The buildings and stone features in Willow Creek Park are a good example of the Rustic Style as interpreted by New Deal agencies for park design. Rustic characteristics featured in the buildings include the use of native stone, traditional construction methods, evident hand craftsmanship, and simple, functional design. The National Park Service promoted the Rustic Style, which emphasized the use of native materials and adaptation of indigenous or "frontier" methods of construction. This design philosophy was an ideal fit with many New Deal

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programs. The goal of these programs was employment, so the majority of costs were to be spent on labor. Native materials were used because they were usually the least expensive. Traditional construction methods which were used as they saved the expense of power tools and large machinery and were also more labor intensive. Both Rustic architecture and federal relief buildings were meant to be simple and functional. Willow Creek Park includes many of the features typically found in New Deal era parks including naturalistic landscaping, stone walls, stone fireplaces, scouting facilities, and caretaker housing. As the first CWA project in Colorado, the design of this project likely influenced similar park features that can be found in other parks and cemeteries throughout the eastern plains of Colorado. The development of masonry craftsmanship can be seen in the transition from the rougher work of the CWA structures to the more polished and skilled work seen in the WPA structures.

The period of significance begins in 1933 with the start of construction of the park as a CWA project. Although Lamar residents continue to use the park, the period of significance ends in 1957 in order to comply with the National Register's fifty year rule. The significant dates of 1933 and 1938 represent the start of park construction when New Deal employment on the project began and when the project was completed and could be fully enjoyed by Lamar residents.

### *Historical Background*

"It may be that a 'silk purse cannot be made from a sow's ear' but interested citizens accomplished an equally improbable task when they transformed a hog wallow, weed patch and swamp, into beautiful Willow Creek Park."

R. L. Christy

The development of Willow Creek Park began around 1920 when Lamar resident R. L. Christy was appointed chair of a Rotary Club committee to investigate possible park sites in Lamar. Christy sent questionnaires to over 50 cities to get ideas and did some rough sketches. Christy found that many local groups were interested in a park, but the project seemed impossible to fund and was put aside. In 1933, John Y. Brown, the mayor of Lamar, asked Christy if he had suggestions for a project that the city might submit to the newly forming CWA program.



Organized in late 1933, the CWA was designed to be a public works program that could put people to work quickly, providing immediate relief to help people through the winter of President Roosevelt's first year in office. Jobs were typically small, since the projects were intended to last only 90 days. Road

improvements, flood control, and recreational facilities were popular projects in Colorado. Christy pulled out his sketches and proposed a park on Willow Creek. The mayor quickly submitted an application and Willow Creek Park became the first CWA project approved in Colorado. The work done by the CWA in Willow Creek Park, including landscaping and the construction of a stone building and many stone features was more elaborate than many CWA projects since the project was able to take advantage of the work already done by Christy.

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The CWA project combined "beautiful landscaping and practical water control." Flooding on Willow Creek had been a problem since the Lamar area was settled. It was hoped that the CWA project would end the "reign of damage." Plans called for the construction of three dams on the creek: the first would be located three miles south of Lamar, the second at the south edge of the main park, and the third would be near the center of the park where the creek swings east. The third dam would create a quarter-mile long lake following the course of the creek bed. The lake would be three to four feet deep and surrounded by stone ripraping.

Work on Willow Creek Park began on November 27, 1933. The project planned to employ more than 200 men for 3 months, with each man working 130 hours per month. Unskilled labor was paid 45 cents per hour and skilled labor received \$1.10 per hour. The CWA spent approximately \$55,000 on the project with about 80% of the federal funds spent on labor and 20% on materials. A local contribution of funds for the park construction was not required. Funds for purchase of the park land were raised by local citizens, who then donated the land to the City of Lamar. The community was very involved with the development of the park. Local clubs, including the Rotary Club, Lions Club, Rainbow Girls and Lamar Women's Club, donated various tree plantings (including spruce, pine, and cedar). The National Youth Administration (NYA), another New Deal agency, employed local teens on landscaping projects in the park. Established in 1935, the NYA provided work relief and employment programs for 16 to 25 year olds. The goal was to provide part-time employment that would provide youth with practical experience and encourage them to remain in school.



According to Christy, within days of the project's approval, "several hundred, hitherto idle men, were working at the park site, building a canal and dike at the north end of the present park. With shovels, wheel-barrows, horses and slips they moved dirt in large quantities—the happiest bunch of workers anyone ever had seen. They had been out of work for a long time." The CWA program ended in the spring of 1934. The CWA project file described the completed work as follows: "Work consisted of clearing and grubbing site of park and removing large cottonwood trees in channel. Work accomplished in park has consisted of building lake, roads, dam, planting trees, building shelter house, fireplaces, walks, bridges and ornamental rock fence." The file indicated that there was further work to be accomplished on the dam and flood control as well as planting and beautifying.



An island created by the CWA was destroyed by a flood shortly after construction. However, the earthen dike that was part of the CWA project was a success. In 1934 the *Lamar Daily Democrat* reported, "The great earthen dike recently constructed as a CWA project proved a life-saver for Lamar for the second time in as many months. The property damage to the citizens would undoubtedly have mounted to many thousands of dollars from the raging waters of Willow Creek if it had not been for the

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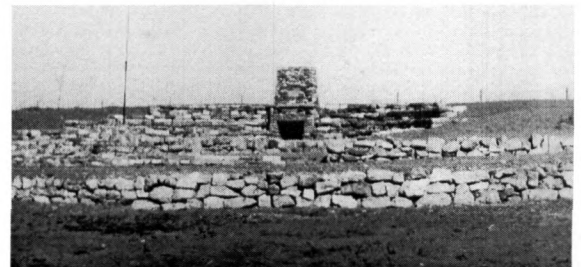
flood prevention project.”

After the CWA program ended, work continued at the park with FERA funds. FERA was established in May 1933 to provide relief to the unemployed but was slow to get started. Designed to work cooperatively with state governments, FERA provided federal grants that could be used to provide work through a variety of programs. When the CWA program shut down in March 1934, FERA continued and expanded many of the projects begun by the CWA. In May 1934 the *Lamar Daily News* reported that 24 men were working in the park under FERA. Work was still ongoing in September, with a crew working to improve the channel of Willow Creek as well as cleaning and attractively arranging the park grounds.



FERA was mandated to last two years. When it ended in May 1935, the WPA replaced it. Absorbing the former FERA public works program, The WPA modified and expanded work relief, becoming the major source of public jobs for the unemployed during the latter part of the thirties. The main goal of the WPA program was to put the unemployed back to work and off the relief rolls. “Small useful projects” were designed to provide employment for a maximum number of needy “employable” workers in the “shortest time possible.” In January 1936, a WPA project got

underway in Willow Creek Park with approximately 100 men assigned to the project. The project had a WPA budget of \$21,500 with a local contribution of \$8,500. The project included further flood control work and the construction of the Caretaker's House. The city planned to hire “a caretaker, versed in horticulture, to superintend the care of the beautiful Fairmount cemetery, the Riverside cemetery, the library park, the city playground and Willow Creek Park.” The new building would house the caretaker, thus “providing expert care on the premises for Lamar's scenic beauty spots.” The Willow Creek Park project was highlighted in the August 1936 issue of *The WPA Worker*, and the caretaker's residence was called out as “the most imposing building in the park. Red, brown, gray, white, and cream colored stone has been used at random in the building, so that a distinctive effect has resulted. There is a small conservatory in conjunction with the caretaker's home for the cultivation and propagation of flowers and shrubs for the park.” The WPA project also included additional landscaping of the park: “In addition to its prime purpose of providing a suitable park for the community of 5,000 persons, the project is giving the town a measure of protection from sand and dust storms, which have been frequent in recent years.” Beyond the park itself, the city also obtained an easement on 280 acres of adjacent land where more than 4,000 cottonwood trees and 6,000 other plants were placed to stop shifting sands. Overall, *The WPA Worker* considered the park a great success:



There have been planted 400 shade trees, 800 shrubs, 500 evergreens and other foliage. All of the native sage in the area has been left untouched to give a natural effect to the park. The new park gives the city, which is 50 years old, its first easily accessible

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recreation ground. The municipal government has piped water to the park for irrigation. . . . As many as 100 cars a day visit the park, even though it is not yet complete. Fireplaces, shelters, and picnic facilities have been placed at numerous places in the park."

On January 2, 1937, the *Lamar Daily News* summarized the work completed at the park so far:

There are two lily ponds, one 225 by 40 feet and the other 30 by 20 feet. A wading pool measures 30 by 40 feet. There is a chain of five pools with the falls between them and covering 3,000 square feet. Ten fireplaces are placed about Willow Creek Park for the convenience of picnickers. One large fireplace is to be found in the shelter house which is for inclement weather. A Boy Scout kiva has a large fireplace. There is a caretaker's cottage, which has attracted a great deal of attention. A conservatory [green house] with the latest equipment is connected with it.



A second WPA project application was submitted in March 1937. It requested a total of \$26,447 for additional park work, with \$20,805 of the total coming from the WPA and the remainder from the city. Work to be carried out included masonry walls, irrigation, and transplanting saplings upstream from the park to prevent soil erosion and dust blowing into the park. There were 14,000 saplings planted on a tract south of Lamar. This also seems to be the project under which Pike's Tower was constructed. (The WPA files for the work in the park are

incomplete.) In September 1938, the *Lamar Daily News* reported that the tower was nearly complete. The tower had been the idea of Christy. An amateur historian, Christy had investigated Pike's journey through Colorado on his way to what would later become Pike's Peak, and came to the conclusion that Pike camped on Willow Creek. Pike's Tower was built to commemorate what Christy believed to be the location of his campgrounds.

The completion of the Pike's Tower seems to have marked the completion of New Deal work in the Willow Creek Park. A 25 September 1938, article in the *Denver Post* reported that the state WPA director of operations had announced that the Lamar park project was virtually complete. The total cost of WPA improvements was placed at \$53,493. The park remains a central feature of recreation in Lamar. According to *Lamar, Colorado: Its First Hundred Years: 1886-1986*, the park "is in use every pleasant day of the year."



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- "Big Crew at Work Now on Willow Creek." *Lamar Daily Democrat*, 27 November 1933.
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- Lamar Centennial Committee. *Lamar, Colorado: Its First Hundred Years: 1886-1986*.
- "Lamar City Park Given Mention in WPA Magazine." *Lamar Daily Democrat*, 24 August 1936.
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- "Men Working on Channel of Willow Creek." *Lamar Daily Democrat*, 15 September 1934.
- "Mrs. M.E. Strain Gives Talk on Willow Creek." *Lamar Daily Democrat*, 20 April 1934.
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- "Play." *The WPA Worker*, August 1936: 12.
- "Prowers County Men on Relief Rolls Will Begin Work on Friday." *Lamar Daily Democrat*, 23 November 1933.
- "Six More Work Relief Projects Are Approved." *Lamar Daily Democrat*, 4 May 1934.
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- "Well Organized Work at Willow Creek Project." *Lamar Daily Democrat*, 6 December 1933.
- "Willow Creek been Flooding City Since 1893." *Lamar Daily Democrat*, 23 November 1933.
- "Willow Creek Dike Saves City From Severe Damage." *Lamar Daily Democrat*, 16 June 1934.
- "Willow Creek Park Outstanding Achievement for City of Lamar." *Lamar Daily Democrat*, 2 January 1937.
- "Willow Creek Work Underway." *Lamar Daily Democrat*, 27 January 1936.
- Wolfenbarger, Deon. "Drought, Depression, and Dust: The New Deal in Eastern Colorado Phase 1 Survey Report," September 23, 2005. On file in the Office of Archaeology and Historic

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Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver, Colorado.

\_\_\_\_\_. "New Deal Resources on Colorado's Eastern Plains" National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2005. On file in the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver, Colorado.

"Works Projects Well Under Way in Lamar, Holly." *Lamar Daily Democrat*, 24 November 1933.

#### Archival Sources

Big Timbers Museum, Lamar, Colorado  
National Records and Archives Administration, College Park, Maryland

#### Interviews

Akers, Rick [former Parks and Recreation Director]. Interviewed 12 December 2005 at Willow Creek Park.

Babcock, Chuck [park caretaker]. Interviewed 12 December 2005 at Willow Creek Park.

Willow Creek Park  
Name of Property

Prowers County, Colorado  
County/State

### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreege of Property** 26.2

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. 13 709218 4216940 (NAD27)  
Zone Easting Northing

2. 13 709375 4216940  
Zone Easting Northing

3. 13 709387 4216238  
Zone Easting Northing

4. 13 709312 4216232  
Zone Easting Northing

[ X ] 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 Abigail Christman, Survey Coordinator (Prepared for the property owner)

organization Colorado Preservation Inc. date 11/22/2006

street & number 333 West Colfax Avenue, Suite 300 telephone 303-893-4260

city or town Denver state CO zip code 80204

#### 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 City of Lamar (Dorothy Comer, Lamar Parks & Recreation Facilities Manager)

street & number 102 E. Parmenter Street telephone 719-336-4376

city or town Lamar state CO zip code 81052

**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.

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## **GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

### **UTM REFERENCES**

5. Zone 13; 709208mE; 4216301mN

[The UTMS were derived from heads up digitization on Digital Raster Graphic (DRG) maps provided to OAHP by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.]

### **VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The nominated parcel is located in the E $\frac{1}{2}$  of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 6, Township 23 South, Range 46 West, 6<sup>th</sup> P.M. The nomination boundary is indicated on the USGS map. The boundaries are generally described as follows: Parkview Avenue forms the west boundary; the stone wall separating the park from the adjacent parking lot and swimming pool is the northern boundary; Willow Valley Road forms the east boundary; a stone wall on the eastern side of the park and Memorial Drive on the western side define the southern boundary.

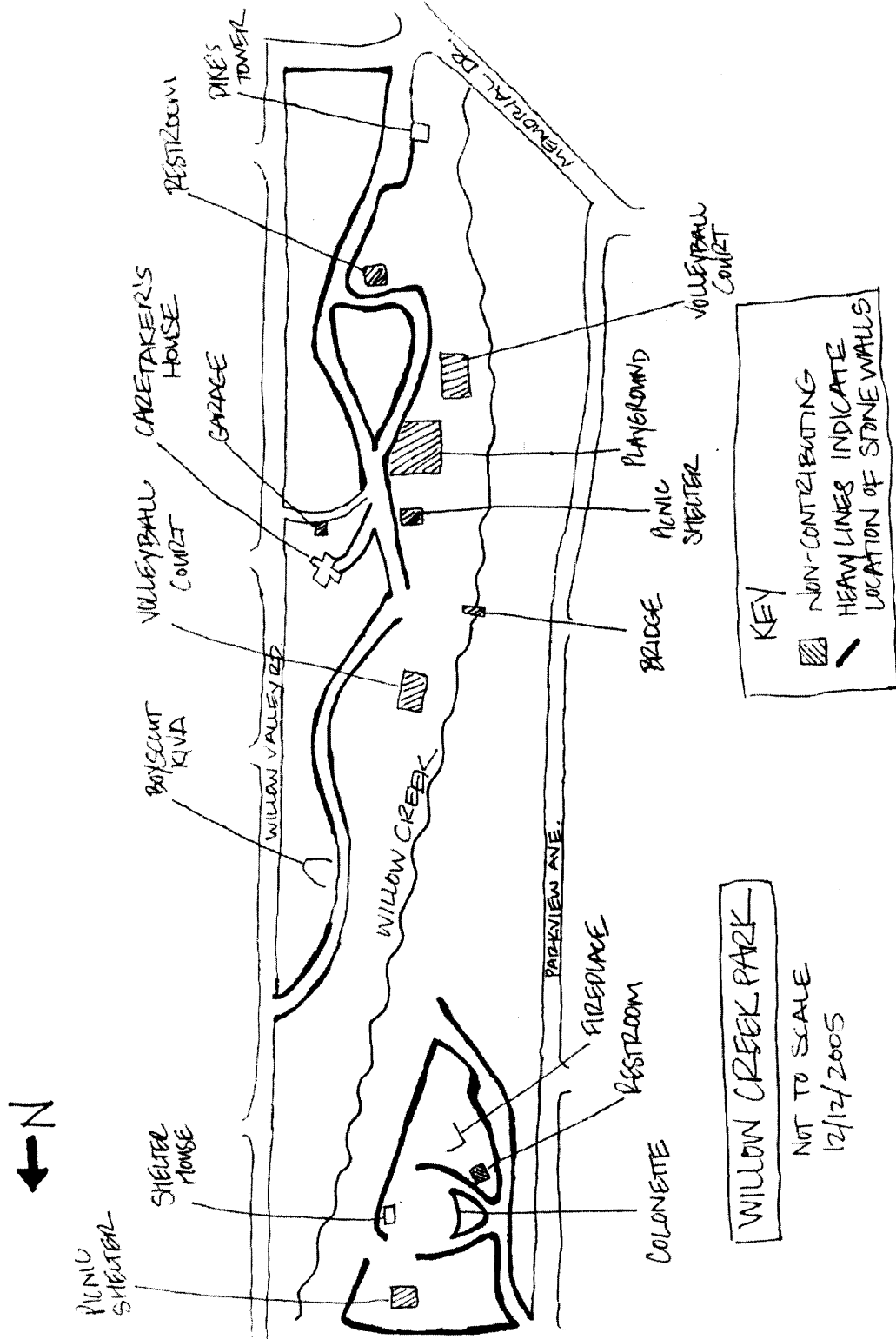
### **BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The nominated parcel includes the land historically associated with formal park functions and all of the New Deal constructed stone walls, buildings, and structures. Although New Deal agencies carried out flood control and erosion work in a larger area, it has been significantly altered and lacks integrity. The construction of Memorial Drive isolated a small piece at the southwest corner from the rest of the park; it was excluded as it is no longer associated with park functions.

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## PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to all photographs:

Name of Property: Willow Creek Park

Location: Lamar, Prowers County, Colorado

Photographer: Abigail Christman

Date of Photographs: December 12, 2005

Location of Negatives: Digital files submitted to National Register, Washington, D.C.

(Photographs printed on HP Premium Photo Paper with HP 100 gray photo cartridge.)

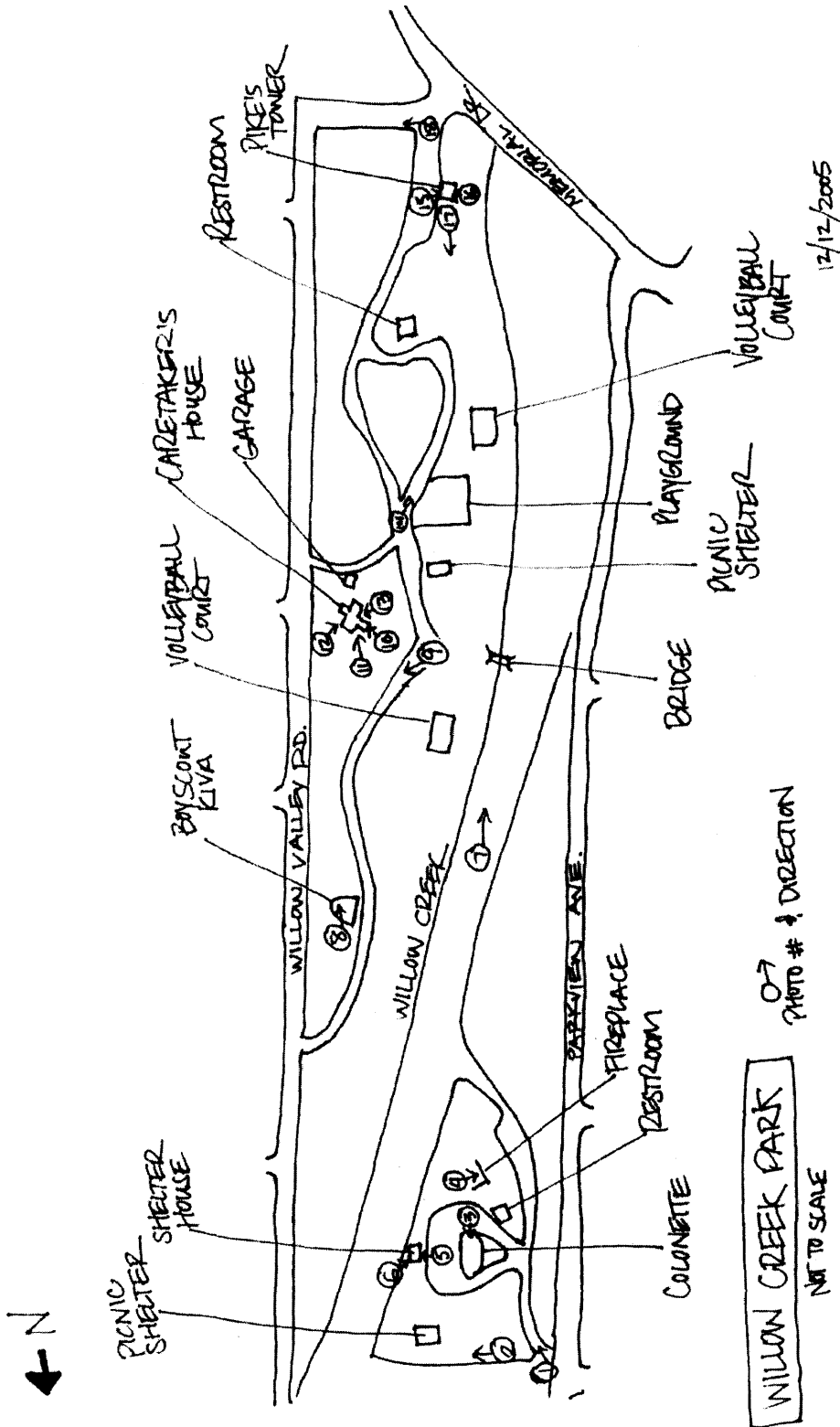
Photo No.	Photographic Information
1	Northwest entrance to Willow Creek Park, showing entrance gates. Restroom building visible between gates. Facing southeast.
2	Stone wall at the northern boundary of the park. Parking lot and public swimming pool are located to the north of the wall. A picnic shelter is visible on the south side of the wall. Facing west.
3	Colonette. Facing north.
4	Fireplace. Facing southwest.
5	West side of the Shelter House. Facing east.
6	East side of the Shelter House. Facing southwest.
7	Willow Creek and its floodplain. A volleyball court is visible on the left side of the photograph. Facing south.
8	Boy Scout Kiva. Facing southeast.
9	Typical view of the stone walls that line the drives through the park. Facing northeast.
10	Northwest side of the Caretaker's House. Facing southeast.
11	Northwest and northeast sides of the Caretaker's House. Facing south.
12	Southeast side of the Caretaker's House. Modern garage is visible at the left edge of the photograph. Facing southwest.
13	Southwest and northwest sides of the Caretaker's House with the green house visible on the right. Facing northeast.
14	Typical view of the stone walls that line the drives through the park. A restroom is visible on the left side of the photograph and the playground is visible on the right side. Facing southwest.
15	East side of Pike's Tower. Facing west.
16	West side of Pike's tower. Facing east.
17	View from Pike's Tower. A volleyball court is located on the left side of the photograph; a restroom is visible at the center. Facing north
18	Stone wall at the southeast entrance to the park. Facing east.
19	Wooden bridge connecting the two sides of the park. Facing east.

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USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP  
Lamar East Quadrangle, Colorado  
7.5 Minute Series

