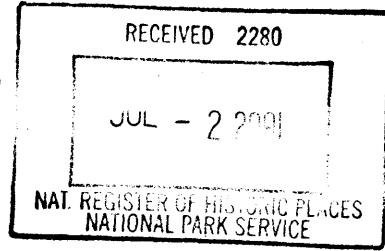


JUN 25 2001

NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions 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 any 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 Le Mars Municipal Park and Golf Course Historic District

other names/site number Le Mars Recreation Park

=====

**2. Location**

=====

street&number NE corner of Le Mars, 4th Ave.NE or Hwy 3 not for publication  
city or town Le Mars vicinity X  
state Iowa code IA county Plymouth code 149 zip code 51031

=====

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

=====

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 X statewide X locally. (\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Ronell J. Soike June 26, 2001  
Signature of certifying official Date

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA  
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 commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Le Mars Municipal Park & Golf Course  
Plymouth County, Iowa

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Edson H. Beall

entered in the National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the

National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the

National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

EM

Signature of Keeper

8-8-01

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

private

public-local

public-State

public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

building(s)

district

site

structure

object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

11

1

4

16

Noncontributing

8 buildings

0 sites

1 structures

     objects

9 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
Conservation Movement in Iowa MPS

United States Department of the Interior  
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Le Mars Municipal Park & Golf Course  
Plymouth County, Iowa

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Recreation & Culture Sub: Outdoor Recreation

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Recreation & Culture Sub: Outdoor Recreation

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Park Rustic

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>concrete</u>
roof	<u>asphalt</u>
walls	<u>stone</u>
other	<u>wood</u>

\_\_\_\_\_

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

United States Department of the Interior  
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Le Mars Municipal Park & Golf Course  
Plymouth County, Iowa

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.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Social History  
Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance 1935-1940

Significant Dates 1935  
1940

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Unknown

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

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Le Mars Municipal Park & Golf Course  
Plymouth County, Iowa

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 121 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone Easting	Northing		Zone Easting	Northing
1	<u>14 732452.04</u>	<u>4742842.18</u>	9	<u>14 733066.06</u>	<u>4742334.26</u>
2	<u>14 732821.63</u>	<u>4742730.83</u>	10	<u>14 733050.42</u>	<u>4742385.05</u>
3	<u>14 732897.89</u>	<u>4742838.27</u>	11	<u>14 732811.85</u>	<u>4742377.24</u>
4	<u>14 733048.46</u>	<u>4742875.39</u>	12	<u>14 732723.85</u>	<u>4742396.77</u>
5	<u>14 733048.46</u>	<u>4742971.11</u>	13	<u>14 732655.41</u>	<u>4742394.82</u>
6	<u>14 733376.99</u>	<u>4742992.60</u>	14	<u>14 732541.99</u>	<u>4742394.82</u>
7	<u>14 733472.81</u>	<u>4743088.32</u>	15	<u>14 732385.55</u>	<u>4742553.06</u>
8	<u>14 733488.45</u>	<u>4742619.47</u>	16	<u>14 732293.64</u>	<u>4742553.06</u>

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.)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Le Mars Municipal Park & Golf Course  
Plymouth County, Iowa

=====  
11. Form Prepared By  
=====

name/title Iris Hemmingson, Chairperson of Le Mars Historic Preservation Commission

organization LeMars Historic Preservation Commission date November 15, 2000

street & number 736 3rd St. SE telephone 712-546-7143

city or town Le Mars state Iowa zip code 51031  
=====

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Le Mars

street & number 40 Central Ave. SE telephone 712-546-7018

city or town Le Mars state Iowa zip code 51031  
=====

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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Le Mars Municipal Park & Golf Course  
Plymouth County, Iowa

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**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION:**

Le Mars Municipal Park and Golf Course (LMP) covers over 121 acres located at the northeast corner of the city along Willow Creek. It is one of the largest recreational park complexes (perhaps the largest) constructed in Iowa during the 1930's under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration. Willow Creek meanders along the northern edge of the park. A nine-hole golf course covers forty-five acres of land on the east side of the park. (An additional nine holes were added in 1990 on additional ground not included in this nomination.) Twenty-five buildings and other structures are spread out over the seventy-five acres on the west side. Most of the structures are of stone veneer construction. A local quarry supplied the stone, probably donated, since WPA project records note that the building material was waste stone.

On the far west side, a park custodian's cottage and two garage-service buildings are located just inside the entrance off Fourth Avenue NE. This group of three buildings is separated from the recreational areas by a drainage. A graveled park road provides vehicle access to the swimming area across a small bridge. This area contains two manmade ponds, parking areas, footpaths, concrete sidewalks, camping trailer pads, and a bathhouse-shelterhouse. The asphalted vehicle road winds up a bluff on the south side of the ponds to a second recreational complex located some distance east of the bathhouse-shelterhouse. This complex may be described as a picnic-camping area surrounded on three sides by a stand of trees. It contains more graveled parking areas, a Boy/Girl Scout cabin, six Adirondack cabins, and a modern picnic shelter. Continuing east, the drive passes south of some tennis courts. The drive divides at the golf course building complex, which includes a clubhouse, two additional golf cart houses, a maintenance building (originally the caddy shack), a parking area, and then the golf course. The drive continues to the second park entrance, providing vehicle access from the south off Highway 3. The alternate Y leads to the golf cart storage buildings.

Sixteen buildings and structures contribute to the historic character of the park: the west entrance portals (LMP-01), the park custodian's cottage (LMP-02), a garage-service building (LMP-03), a small vehicle bridge (LMP-04), two artificial ponds (LMP-05, 06), a bathhouse-shelterhouse (LMP-07), a Boy/Girl Scout cabin (LMP-08), six Adirondack cabins (LMP-09 through LMP-14), the clubhouse (LMP-15), and the golf course (LMP-16).

There are nine non-contributing buildings and structures: the caddyshack (LMP-101), a building which was part of the 1930's development but which has two wings added and is now used as a maintenance building for the golf course; five golf cart houses (LMP-102,-103,-104,-105,-106), all of which were constructed after 1942; tennis courts (LMP-107), which were originally built in the 1930's but have been completely rebuilt over the years; an open-walled picnic shelter (LMP-108), which is a modern structure; and a second garage-service building (LMP-109), another modern building which is located behind the caretaker's residence and the historic garage-service building. The noncontributing structures do not compromise the historic integrity of the district to any appreciable degree. New structures generally are compatible with the old in terms of scale, materials, and siting. The altered caddy shack is the most noticeable intrusion. Although it is not the only altered building in the park, it is considered noncontributing because the additions exceed the original structure in square footage.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Section 7 Page 2

Le Mars Municipal Park & Golf Course  
Plymouth County, Iowa

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The campsite identified as LMP-110 on the map (page 11) is not counted as contributing or non-contributing because it is a modern inconsequential landscape feature.

The complex, when completed in the spring of 1940, also included an open-air amphitheatre built into the slope on the east side of the bathhouse-shelterhouse, an ice-skating shelter that was moved to the north (swimming) pond in winter, and a ball diamond. All three of these facilities have since been removed. Their removal certainly changes the original park plan, but since these facilities were replaced with grassy areas and trees, the historic setting remains intact. Indeed, the park setting is almost entirely manmade, designed around the one natural feature of note: Willow Creek. As part of the overall development project, 3000 trees were planted (including yellow pine, ash, American elm, hackberry, and Chinese elm) drainage ditches were excavated, the creekbed was filled in some places and straightened in others, and banks were sloped. Grading, excavation, and filling for the park and the golf course combined required moving approximately 14,000 cubic yards of earth. (In 1999 a bike-walking path was added to the circumference of the park/golfcourse.)

No construction drawings or site plans for the park and golf course were located during the research for this project, but newspaper accounts and WPA project records in the National Archives indicate that design plans were the responsibility of the Iowa State Planning Board. One news account said that J.R. Fitzsimmons, landscape architect from the extension department at Ames, prepared at least one proposed set of plans. The state nursery at Ames also provided trees for the park. Presumably, then, the design work was handled through the Central Design Office of the State Landscape Architect, John Fitzsimmons, who operated out of the Iowa State College Extension Division. If so, no plans for the project survive as part of the Fitzsimmons' Collection of drawings housed at ISU College of Design. Fitzsimmon's proposed plans are described in some detail in the Feb. 22, 1935, edition of the Le Mars Globe-Post, although that plan indicated 3 levels for the bathhouse, of which only one was apparently built. Engineers from the Iowa Works Progress Administration area office in Orange City supervised construction. Nic Mathey, a mechanic and contractor, was the local superintendent of the park improvements. Dick Ross, an experienced mason, was mentioned in a news account as the builder of the bathhouse and Scout cabin.



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Le Mars Municipal Park & Golf Course  
Plymouth County, Iowa

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Entrance Portals (LMP-01) (Contributing Structure)

The west entrance off Fourth Avenue NE is marked by an impressive set of stone portals which extends a distance of 35' on either side of the drive. Each side consists of three massive stone piers, one of them freestanding and the other two anchoring short sections of stone wall. The piers are slightly tapered from the base upward. Original metal lantern-type light fixtures are attached to the freestanding piers on the west side, facing the road. Metal hinges protruding from the inside walls of these piers indicated that at one time the portals were gated. The masonry pattern consists of mixed large and small rough-cut rubble blocks, laid in more-or-less regular courses and probably veneered to a concrete core. The construction dates are undocumented, though work began under WP #218 in 1935 and ended under WP #3126, indicating a probable completion date of 1937. (A newspaper article indicates completion in September 1936. Another said the cost of the park entrance was \$485.)

Park Custodian's Residence (LMP-02) (Contributing Structure)

The park custodian's residence is a modest, one-story stone dwelling measuring approximately 38'x27'. It is nearly rectangular in plan with the exception of a small gable-roofed projection on the northwest corner, which partially frames a right-of-center front entrance on the north facade. The main block of the dwelling has a hipped roof covered with asphalt shingles. Two interior stone chimneys rise from the south rake of the roof. Stone-veneer walls are constructed of rough-cut rubble, and the masonry pattern here consists of smallish rectangular blocks cut to varying dimensions and laid in irregular courses. The original fenestration appears to have been 6/6 wood-sash windows, some of which have been changed to 1/1 wood sash; and all are further protected by modern aluminum-frame storm windows. The front entrance is set off by a stone pilaster and stone-walled steps. A low stone wall extends from the northeast corner of the house to the driveway; its counterpart is located across the driveway adjacent to the garage. A garage addition on the south rear of the house is the only major alteration, and this was constructed without removing any of the stone from the exterior wall. An original lighting fixture hangs at the front entrance. The cottage was constructed between December 10, 1937, and May 1940 at a cost of \$2932.

Garage-Service Building (LMP-03) (Contributing Structure)

The garage-service building is a one-story stone-veneer building with a cottage-like appearance. It is constructed of rough-cut stones laid in irregular courses, with the masonry pattern resembling that of the Adirondack cabins. It has a low-pitched gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. The original 4/4 wood sash windows remain. A wood-panel pass door and two wood-panel overhead garage doors are located on the south facade. Also on the south side, an interior stone chimney rises from the roof rake. A low stone wall curves from the edge of the driveway on the southwest corner to the garage pass door, continuing the line established by the stone wall attached to the house. Other notable details include two wood-shingled gable dormers on the north side as well as exposed

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Le Mars Municipal Park & Golf Course  
Plymouth County, Iowa

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purlins along the roof-wall juncture. A photograph taken May 27, 1936 shows the latter to be the remains of a pergola which ran the length of the north facade. The garage is believed to have been constructed under WP #218 between February 15 and May 11, 1936

The 1936 photograph reveals that the north facade has been changed considerably from its original appearance. At some undetermined time, a pass door and two hinged garage doors were removed. The openings were closed with stone masonry walls, although two small windows were placed where the garage doors had been. Long-time park director, Dennis Lenihan did not recall this work being done during his tenure, which suggests that the alterations took place many years ago. In addition, the changes are not readily visible and appear to be the work of a stone mason skilled enough to tie the new stone veneer to the original.

Vehicle Bridge (LMP-04) (Contributing Structure)

The vehicle bridge is a small structure, technically a large concrete box culvert with stone guard rails. It was constructed in 1938 according to the WPA plaque located along the north rail. The cost was estimated to be \$331. The culvert has angled wings on both sides. The guard rail consists of four, more-or-less regular courses of rough-cut rubble, topped with a stone cap. Each guard rail angles at two points to follow the line of the culvert wings.

Artificial Ponds (LMP-05, -06) (Contributing Structure)

Two manmade ponds are the focal points of a swimming/fishing area. These structures were excavated by hand as part of the original project in 1935-6, and both are fed by natural springs. The larger pond is approximately five acres in size (LMP-05) and was built for use as a swimming pond. Apurtenant water facilities included a stone diving tower and wooden docks. These have been removed. The other pond (LMP-06) is smaller, and appears to have been constructed as a duck/fishing pond. A footpath is located between the two ponds, connecting to a concrete walkway that ascends to the level of the bathhouse-shelterhouse. A newspaper article indicates that the major portion of funds for the park were earmarked for the moving of dirt—\$16,010.

Bathhouse-Shelterhouse (LMP-07) (Contributing Structure)

The bathhouse-shelterhouse is a large, one-story building. The plan is quite irregular, resembling an off-center cross. Stone veneer walls are constructed of rough-cut "Kasota" stone laid in more-or-less regular courses. The building is really two structures, which accounts for the irregular plan and the multiple roof planes. The bathhouse portion was the first structure to be built in the park, constructed in 1935-6 with Emergency Relief Authority funds. This portion is L-shaped with the longest side (the west front) measuring approximately 65'; the two wings each measure 26' wide. The roof of this portion of the building is complex, with both gable and Jerkinhead sections. A shelterhouse was added on the north side of the bathhouse between November 15, 1935, and March 20, 1937, under projects WP #218 and #2878. The shelterhouse wing measures approximately 76' long on the west front and 30' deep, and the walls are also stone veneer. Shelterhouse construction also included a 28'x14' wood-frame wing projecting from the west front. Fenestration along the projecting west wing

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

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Le Mars Municipal Park & Golf Course  
Plymouth County, Iowa

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has been changed. The original windows were tripled 1/1 wood-sash arranged in three banks side-by-side, giving this room the appearance of an enclosed porch. At some undetermined date, these windows were replaced with three single windows of much smaller size. A long flight of wooden steps led from the building down a gentle slope to a horseshoe-shaped concrete walkway which defined the east edge of the swimming pond. (LMP-05) Concrete steps were added during a later WPA project, leading directly to the pond; these were relocated in later years, and then removed in 1999 so that the entire horseshoe is now a grassy area.

Boy/Girl Scout Cabin (LMP-08) (Contributing Structure)

The Scout Cabin is a one-story stone building of irregular plan. The main block is a 32'6" by 20'8" rectangle with a small 10' by 11'10" ell on the east rear. Short buttresses project from the east rear wall of the ell. An intersecting gable roof has very shallow eaves. The gable section of the ell does not reach as high as that of the main block, and a large stone exterior chimney joins the intersection of the ell and the main block at the building rear, features which give this facade of the building more architectural complexity, and therefore more visual interest, than the front. The stone walls of this building have their own distinctive pattern, as does the interior stone fireplace. Stones are still rough-cut rubble, but here they are laid in irregular courses, which lends a much more rustic feel to the structure. Fenestration is similar to other buildings, with wood beam lintels and stone sills, though here the sills are flush with the exterior wall. The cabin was entirely constructed under project WP #218. Construction began on November 28, 1935, and was completed on October 22, 1936. (Newspaper articles state construction began fall of 1936 and was completed during 1937. One article printed construction figures of \$893, plus \$800 in materials already on hand.)

Six Adirondack Cabins (LMP-09 through LMP-14) (Contributing Structures)

Six small cabins, actually no more than one-room shelters, were built for use by scout groups. They were built in the Adirondack style, which makes them unusual among Iowa park structures, since this type of park cabin is rare in Iowa. The shelters are enclosed on three sides, open on one, and covered by a saltbox roof. The approximate measure of each is 10'x13'. Their stone walls are constructed of rough-cut rubble laid in irregular courses, a method which further enhances the rustic appearance. Roof rafters and supports consist of peeled logs. While the original roof coverings probably were wood shingle, they are now standing seam metal. The six cabins are arranged in two straight rows of three each, with the open sides facing one another across an open space. The Boy/Girl Scout cabin sits at one end, creating a U-shaped spatial arrangement. An open picnic shelter of modern construction (LMP-22) now sits at the west end, fully enclosing the central open space. This structure alters the overall design of the compound to some degree, but it does not obscure the original layout nor does it alter the camp-like setting. The Adirondack cabins were constructed under WP #218. Work began on March 20, 1936, and the structures were completed on August 15, 1936.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

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Le Mars Municipal Park & Golf Course  
Plymouth County, Iowa

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Clubhouse (LMP-15) (Contributing Structure)

The clubhouse is a one-story, T-shaped building with an intersecting gable roof. It is constructed of rough-cut stone rubble laid in regular courses. The main block measures 96'5" by 22' set on a north-south axis with an off-center ell measuring 50' by 42'4" extending eastward. WPA records indicated that the main block was constructed in two sections: a 4024 sq. ft. section was constructed between November 14, 1936 and July 20, 1937 under WP #218, and a 22'x34' addition to the north end was built during the winter and spring of 1939-40. This addition accounts for the off-center front entry. Between March 23 and May 24, 1939, two open porches measuring 49'x10' were added to the building on either side of the east ell. One of these remains on the south side. The other has been removed and replaced with a large brick addition measuring 50'x38'10" which brings the north wall of the addition flush with the north wall of the main block. The addition is substantial in size, but since it is located on the rear it does not change the building's appearance on the west front or the south side, which are the primary view facades. Fenestration is predominantly 1/1 wood-sash windows, some of them tripled, with stone sills and wooden beam lintels. These are replacement windows. Photographs taken in 1938 show that the original windows were multipane wood casement windows. The remaining open porch on the south side is supported with rough-hewn wooden posts. An original light fixture hangs outside the porch entrance, which consists of French doors opening to a stone landing. Another original light fixture hangs at the front entrance, which is a deeply recessed archway gently sloping back to a second segmental arch at the pass door. The floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace is the focal point in the large meeting room.

Golf Course (LMP-16) (Contributing Structure)

A nine-hole golf course covers the entire east side of the park complex. This structure was built in 1937-38 as part of project WP #3126. Construction included approximately 7000 cubic yards of earth excavation, greens, tees, 1700' of water line, footbridges, and pathways. Much of the grading and earth moving was done by hand, with approximately 4000 cubic yards moved by truck and 3000 cubic yards by hand with wheelbarrows. In addition to the trees and shrubs purchased through the WPA, a gentleman by the name of Grover Bechtle donated thousands of dollars worth of trees and shrubs for landscaping. In 1990, the City of LeMars purchased additional land north and east of the existing golf course, where nine additional holes have been added.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 7

Le Mars Municipal Park & Golf Course  
Plymouth County, Iowa

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Le Mars Municipal Park and Golf Course is significant under National Register Criterion A as one of Iowa's most extensive municipal park development projects undertaken during the 1930's. The park is also significant under Criterion C because the park design, including several outstanding stone buildings and structures, represents an interesting adaptation of Park Rustic design aesthetics to achieve a natural-like quality in what is almost entirely a human-made setting. The park design and its individual components retain a high degree of historical integrity. The period of significance opened in 1935 when the artificial pond and stone bathhouse were likely completed and ended in 1940 with completion of the WPA portion of the complex.

*Criterion A*

Practically all of Iowa's cities and towns developed at least one municipal park in the fifty years between 1890 and 1940. The majority of these were probably built or vastly improved under the auspices of one or more New Deal relief programs, chiefly the Works Progress Administration, the Public Works Administration, and the Civilian Conservation Corps. In 1933-34, the Iowa State Planning Board surveyed the state and identified 529 city parks in Iowa. On the surface, this number appears substantial, but in relative terms, the average percent of land used for municipal park purposes in Iowa was still only about one-third the national average. Statistics have not been compiled that would tell the number of parks and urban recreation areas developed, at least in part, with New Deal federal funds, but the total might easily be half of all municipal parks in the state. A collection of WPA photographs in the State Historical Society Library contains images for over sixty municipal parks in Iowa that were improved or completely developed with federal funds channeled through this one program. Inasmuch as these photographs appear to have been taken for publicity rather than recordation purposes, the number of municipal parks and recreational areas attributable to WPA funding is probably much greater—and this does not even begin to address projects funded through other New Deal programs.

Municipal park projects varied widely in size and scope. Many small towns received funds for a single project that might have been limited to building a shelterhouse or a swimming pool. Some larger towns and cities developed programs of ongoing work through multiple projects staggered over a period of years. The City of Le Mars was particularly successful with this approach, but other cities, including Des Moines, Dubuque, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Oskaloosa, Clinton, and Fort Dodge also phased work in one park or applied for federal funds to develop several parks serially. In any case, cities across the state took full advantage of federal funds and a labor surplus, and in less than a decade public recreational facilities became standard amenities in urban areas.

In 1934 Le Mars citizens approved a \$15,000 bond for park land acquisition, and early in 1935 the City of Le Mars purchased approximately sixty acres of land on the northeast edge of town along Willow Creek. The tract included a sandy spot that had long been used as a swimming beach, and it was a popular area for picnics. A crowd of 12,000 people attended the first park dedication ceremony on August 4, 1935. The day's program included speeches, contests, sports events, picnic opportunities, and a pageant, offered along with free refreshments and prizes. State officials

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announced that the land would be improved with several facilities over a five-year period, with work carried out under the supervision of the State Planning Board. By that time, the first of what turned out to be several WPA projects had been funded, and crews were at work constructing an artificial pond and a stone bathhouse. It was an ambitious plan which the City grandly presented as a recreation center for all of Plymouth County. George Pew, chairman of the Le Mars Park Board, has been credited as the driving force behind park planning and construction.

No sooner was the park project launched than a group of self-described golf enthusiasts began promoting a plan to acquire forty-five acres of adjoining land north and east of the parkland. The second tract was to be purchased for the city with borrowed money which would eventually be repaid through receipts from golf course users. When the scheme was announced in September of 1935, the Park Board had already applied for another WPA grant to develop a nine-hole course and a clubhouse, and the State Planning Board reportedly had the design plans drawn.

Construction on the golf course began during the winter of 1936. The golf course, supposedly designed by golf-pro Chic Adams, criss-crosses back and forth across Willow Creek. By this time, several park structures had been completed. The entire project did, indeed, take five years to complete, with the last buildings finished early in 1940. Construction proceeded under at least five different WPA projects, and the completed recreation park covered over 120 acres (additional acreage on the north side of Willow Creek was purchased in 1937.) From a popular picnic spot and swimming hole, Le Mar Municipal Park grew to become a recreational center that included two artificial lakes (one used as a swimming pond), a bath and shelterhouse, a Boy/Girl Scout lodge, six Adirondack cabins, an amphitheater, a golf course with clubhouse and caddy shack, a ball field, tennis courts, picnic areas, and a caretaker's residence. The setting had been enhanced with 3000 trees, graveled driveways, improved drainage, and landscaped grounds; elaborate stone portals greeted visitors at the western entrance. When the park was rededicated on July 30, 1939, a few months before completion, several state WPA officials were on hand to express their approval. Ralph E. Johnson, area engineer in charge of the project, proclaimed it "one of the best projects of its kind, including as it does, complete facilities for swimming, baseball, golfing, picnicking, etc." This park was referred to (by the locals) as the New Deal Park for many years.

As one of the most extensive recreational parks built with federal funds in the 1930's, Le Mars Municipal Park also demonstrates the extremes of park development accommodated under the broad mantle of the conservation movement. What began in the late nineteenth century as an urge to beautify cities and provide respite for weary workers had been transformed into an enthusiasm for developing the public recreational potential of areas that had some special natural quality. The change was gradual. During the late nineteenth century, civic planners began to see the aesthetic and social value of incorporating landscaped boulevards and parkways, playgrounds, arboretums, artificial lakes, and public assembly grounds into urban development. These features not only gave cities a beauty they usually lacked, they also provided inexpensive recreational and cultural outlets. The City Beautiful Movement has often been cast as an upper-class expression focused

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on improving urban aesthetics, but Progressive Era social reform types were also concerned about protecting human health and welfare, or "conserving human life" as some called it.

The notion of parks for human welfare also appealed to conservationists who were mainly interested in protecting natural areas with scientific, scenic, or historical value, but not terribly interested in developing recreational areas. During the late 1910's "human welfare" became the bridge which linked park promoters and conservationists. The tremendous rate at which Iowa's state park system grew during the 1920's is attributable in some measure to the affinity which developed between these two camps. But, as parks gained public popularity, their reasons for existing became more numerous. Rising affluence (until the Great Depression) and private automobiles increased both leisure time and individual mobility. As a result, there was greater public demand for recreation areas.

The advent of New Deal relief and conservation programs coincided with this public demand; hence federal funds very often were used to construct recreational facilities as part of park development programs. Conservationists who advocated parks for people during the early twentieth century did not (perhaps could not) foresee the extensive vehicle roads, artificial lakes, swimming pools, amphitheaters, group camping facilities, tennis courts, bandshells, ball fields, and golf courses that would come to characterize park development projects in the 1930's. Yet, by a quirk of circumstances, New Deal programs wedded conservation to civil works. The same state agencies and offices involved in reforestation, wildlife protection, and plant regeneration were, by the mid-1930's, also involved in developing the recreational potential of public lands to a degree conservationists never before envisioned. Historians have generally termed 1942 as the end of the conservation era which had begun in Iowa in 1857.

Even today, the park is multipurpose. Users are golfers, swimmers, picnickers, hikers, fishers, bird watchers, campers, nature lovers, drive-throughers, caretakers, bicyclers, walkers, babysitters, dog walkers, sunbathers, bridge players, partygoers, photographers, vandals, motorcyclers, tennis players, volley ball players, lovers, scouters, painters, drawers, braggers, complainers, builders, dreamers, changers and learners. Recent additions within the original historic park boundaries include campgrounds, tennis courts, and a concrete recreational trail around the perimeter.

*Criterion C*

Le Mars Municipal Park and Golf Course is an outstanding example of the Park Rustic style, reflecting both the architectural and landscape architecture components integral to the whole design aesthetic. The park is particularly unusual because the original natural setting, characterized chiefly by open fields, was hardly park-like. Willow Creek was the one remarkable natural feature, and the entire park was designed to take advantage of it. Landscaping transformed wide open spaces with few trees into gentle hummocks and wooded glens with shaded drives and pathways. The park is also noteworthy for the number of recreational facilities incorporated into its design. Swimming

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pools, bandshells, tennis courts, and ball parks were built in many Iowa parks during the 1930's, but rarely did projects include such a profusion of facilities. The golf course in particular is unusual. At least one other golf course was developed as a WPA project, the course in Waveland Park in Des Moines; however, such elements were rare ingredients of urban park design, in part because they required so much land, and, in part because ongoing maintenance required a user population sufficient for self support.

The park's outstanding theme is that so many different structures, for many different purposes, were constructed in such a brief period of time.

The stone veneer structures in the park present an outstanding collection of Park Rustic architectural designs. Particularly noteworthy are the six Adirondack cabins. These may be the only examples of Adirondack cabin design built in Iowa parks during the 1930's. If not unique, they are certainly rare in Iowa parks. The stonework is also noteworthy for the variety of masonry patterns employed. Though the names of the local stonemasons involved have been lost to history, it is obvious that more than one stonemason supervised the cutting and laying of stone. Other notable design features found among the buildings include the recessed entry and south loggia of the clubhouse, the siting of the Boy/Girl Scout cabin and the Adirondack cabins, the cottage-like garage, the siting of the garage and residence, the complex entrance portals, and the original lighting fixtures remaining in various places. These stone structures also give the park visual continuity. The diversity of activity areas would be far more obvious if the structures in each area were of different architectural styles. The stone not only identifies the various components, but links them with one another and with a common point in time.



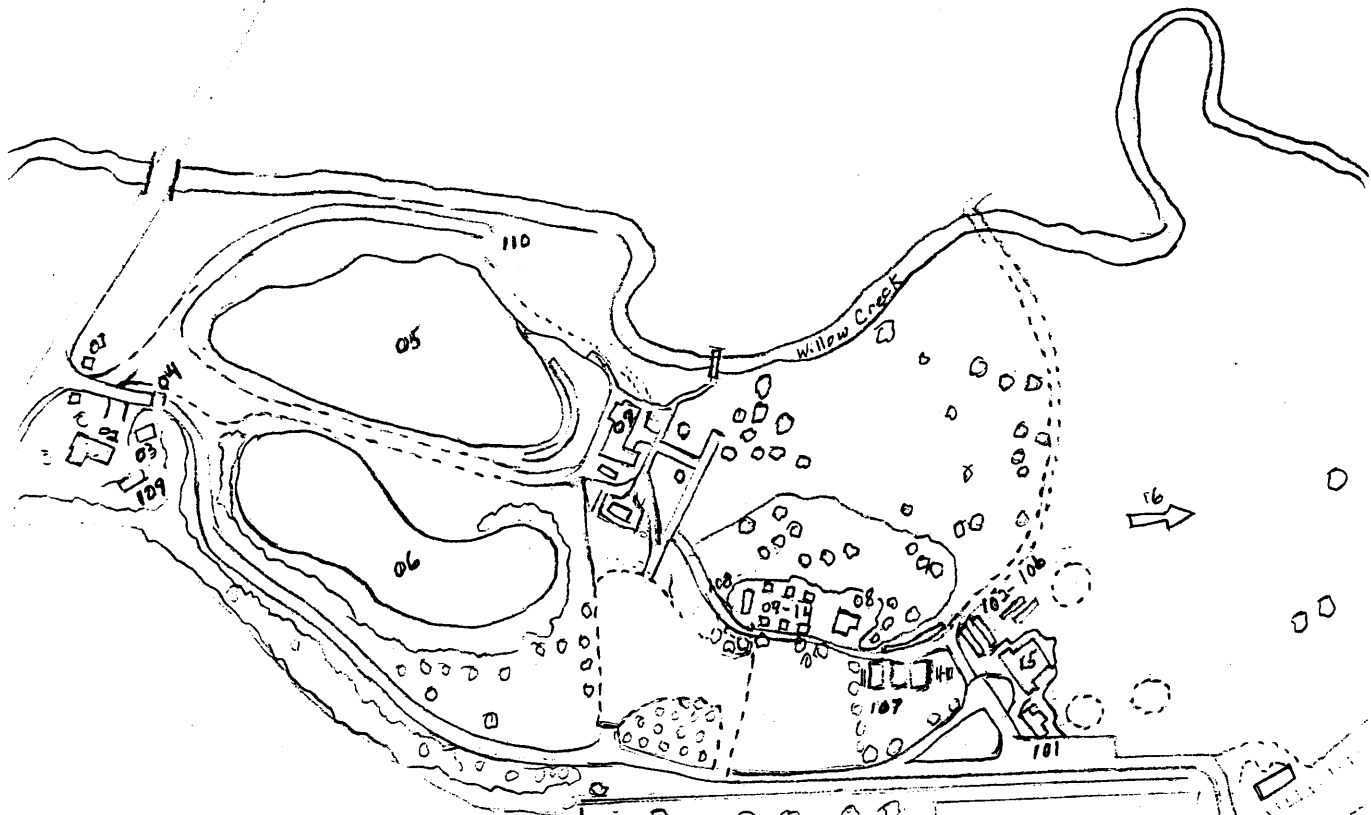
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Le Mars Municipal Park & Golf Course  
name of property  
Plymouth County, Iowa  
county and State

Sketch Map



Contributing: 01-16  
Noncontributing: 100 series

- |         |                           |
|---------|---------------------------|
| 01      | Entrance Portals          |
| 02      | Custodian's Cottage       |
| 03      | Garage-Service Building   |
| 04      | Vehicle Bridge            |
| 05      | Swimming Pond             |
| 06      | Fishing/Duck Pond         |
| 07      | Bathhouse/Shelterhouse    |
| 08      | Boy/Girl Scout Cabin      |
| 09-14   | Adirondack Cabins         |
| 15      | Clubhouse                 |
| 16      | Golf Course               |
| 101     | Caddy Shack (Maintenance) |
| 102-106 | Golf Cart Sheds           |
| 107     | Tennis Courts             |
| 108     | Picnic Shelter            |
| 109     | Garage-Maintenance        |
| 110     | Campsites                 |



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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

Le Mars Municipal Park and Golf Course covers 121.63 acres located in the northeast quarter of Section 8 and the southwest quarter of Section 10, T-92N, R-45W as shown on the map.

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

These boundaries are the geographical limits of the recreational park constructed 1935-1940 and which are associated with the period of significance.