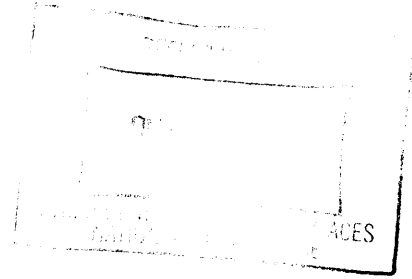


1115

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



1. Name of Property

historic name Nichols Park

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 1.9 miles south of intersection Lake Road and Main Street not for publication N/A


city or town Henryetta vicinity N/A

state Oklahoma code OK county Okmulgee code 111

zip code 74437

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)



Signature of certifying official

10-25-06

Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO
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

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.

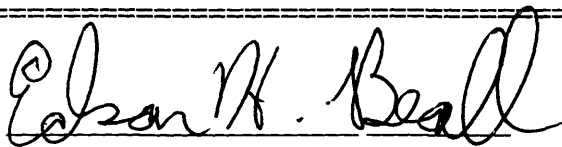
___ determined eligible for the
National Register

___ See continuation sheet.

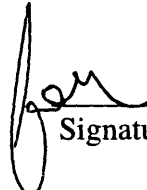
___ determined not eligible for the
National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain):



12-6-06


Signature of Keeper

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	Noncontributing
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>4</u>	<u>2</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>9</u>	<u>3</u> 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.)
N/A

=====
6. Function or Use
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE

Sub: outdoor recreation

Sub: _____
Sub: _____
Sub: _____
Sub: _____
Sub: _____
Sub: _____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE

Sub: outdoor recreation

Sub: _____
Sub: _____
Sub: _____
Sub: _____
Sub: _____
Sub: _____

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: NPS Rustic

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE:sandstone
roof ASPHALT
walls STONE:sandstone

other STONE:sandstone

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

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

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)

- ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
- ARCHITECTURE
- LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
- _____
- _____
- _____

Period of Significance 1938-1941

=====
8. Statement of Significance (Continued)
=====

Significant Dates _____

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

_____ N/A _____

Cultural Affiliation _____ N/A _____

Architect/Builder Civilian Conservation Corps , builder
National Park Service , designer

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

=====
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: _____

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreege of Property 115 Acres MOL

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

Zone Easting Northing		Zone Easting Northing	
A	<u>15 229320 3922720</u>	C	<u>15 229660 3922380</u>
B	<u>15 229450 3922540</u>	D	<u>15 229650 3922320</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.)

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

name/title Cynthia Savage, Architectural Historian, for Henryetta Chamber of Commerce

organization Architectural Resources and Community Heritage Consulting date August 2006

street & number 346 County Road 1230 telephone 405/459-6200

city or town Pocasset state OK zip code 73079

=====
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 Henryetta; Mayor Gary Clason

street & number P.O. Box 608 telephone _____

city or town Henryetta state OK zip code 74437

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 9

Nichols Park
name of property
Okmulgee County, Oklahoma
county and state

MATERIALS (Continued from page 4): roof METAL

SUMMARY

Nichols Park is a municipal park developed between 1938 and 1941 by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the National Park Service (NPS). The park is located two miles south of downtown Henryetta in Okmulgee County, Oklahoma. The park was developed around the town's original water reservoir. Constructed in 1910, the reservoir served as the water source for the community until 1928 when a new, considerably larger reservoir was constructed a couple miles to the east of the original. Beginning in October 1938, the CCC constructed a handful of buildings, as well as a number of smaller resources including culverts, picnic tables, water faucets and fire pits in the park. With the 1910 dam on the west side, the CCC concentrated their construction efforts on the long sides of the lake with development occurring on nearly opposite sides of the lake. The rocky ground slopes steeply toward the water on the south side of the lake and more gently on the north and east sides. The highlight of the park is the sizeable beach house located at the base of a hill on the north central curve of the shoreline. Up another hill to the southeast of the beach house is a picnic shelter with a picnic area and a comfort station located farther to the southeast. On the opposite side of the lake, there is a large picnic shelter towards the center of a large picnic area with separate restrooms across the road and an eight-spot camping area on the northwest corner of this section of the park. The park has two entries providing access to the recreational areas on either side of the lake. Both entries have large boulders creating an entry perimeter, stone entry markers and a sign over the central roadway held aloft by metal poles.

Limited change has occurred in the park since the end of the period of significance. The historic CCC-built Caretaker's House, located about two-tenths of a mile southeast of the north entry gate on the north side of the road, has been modified sufficiently, particularly by infill of the breezeway, that its historic integrity has been compromised. On a lesser scale, the roof material on the Beach House, the north picnic shelter and the comfort station has been changed to metal and the south picnic shelter has been re-roofed with asphalt shingles. Other original resources have disappeared over the sixty-year-plus history of the park. The boat dock on the northwest side of the lake, which retains its historic sign on the main north park road, has been replaced with a fishing pier. Additionally, there is no remaining material left of the two other original boat docks, one on either side of the lake, or the historic diving tower located to the west of the Beach House.

Nonhistoric development in the park includes erection of two fishing piers and laying of the black-top road around the far east side of the current park boundaries which connects the north side CCC features to the south side CCC recreational area. Although the north segment of this road was apparently developed as a trail by the CCC, the paving of the road and the development of the segment connecting to the recreational area south of the lake was done by 1963 and just prior to construction of the Indian Nation Turnpike which truncated the park. Originally encompassing 640 acres spread over two sections, the turnpike swerved around the lake and main CCC facilities but

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cut off roughly the east one-third of the park. Additional changes at the park includes the creation of a Soap Box Derby Track in about 1965 off the main north park road, towards the east side.

Despite the changes, the park retains a notable degree of integrity. The overall site maintains a number of landscaping elements which define the various areas of the park. In addition to trees, these include boulder fences, stone-lined channels and ditches and stone culverts. The stone and concrete picnic tables and stone fire rings, as well as the water faucets extended through boulders, are emblematic of the CCC's development of minor amenities to encourage enjoyment and use of the site.

A total of twelve resources, including the park site itself, are counted separately within the nomination. Of these, nine are considered contributing with three being noncontributing. Highlighting the contributing resources are the larger CCC construction efforts, particularly the beach house and the two picnic shelters. Of the noncontributing, only one, the Caretaker's House, is a CCC-related resource which has lost its integrity. The other two resources, the fishing piers were added to the park after the period of significance and, thus, are unrelated to the CCC's efforts in development of the park.

The boundaries of the park for the purposes of this nomination were defined by the black-top road that now encircles the park. While portions of the road are nonhistoric, it creates an easily identifiable boundary. Importantly, the road also links the two large, primary areas of CCC development, aiding in the definition of the district as a single contiguous entity. Due to the presence of the turnpike, it is not feasible to nominate the park in its original entirety. Additionally, the majority of notable historic elements constructed by the CCC are within the area defined by the road. The boundaries also exclude the baseball and softball fields and rodeo arena located on the far north central side of the park. While the original park included this type of amenities, likely in this same location, facilities of modern materials have since been erected which disconnect the significance of this portion of the park from the historic CCC-developed areas.

DESCRIPTION

Located two miles south of downtown Henryetta, Nichols Park is situated off of a section road aptly named Lake Road. Lake Road also serves as State Highway 52. The area around the park is largely residential with the houses becoming more scattered and modern as the road proceeds southward from downtown. Despite being located nearly a mile and a half south of the city proper, the city limits of Henryetta extend narrowly along Lake Road to encompass the park. The city limits, however, were not extended to include the other city-related properties in the area. To the direct east of Nichols Park about a mile and a half is the huge Lake Henryetta. To the west of Nichols Park about a mile is the Henryetta Golf Country Club with the Henryetta Municipal Airport located about a mile farther west of this.

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The overall **Nichols Park** is considered as one contributing site (Resource No. 1). The park was overwhelmingly designed by the CCC during the years 1938 to 1941 with only minor modifications since then. The park retains an appreciable degree of feeling and association with the CCC's park development efforts, particularly on the municipal level. While there are designed areas in the park which have different functions, such as the fishing area, beach area and the camping area, all of the areas relate to the overall recreational function of the park with only minor landscape elements, including boulder barriers and systematic tree planting, separating them. Within each area are also CCC-built objects which aid in the use of the area, including signage, picnic tables, fire rings and water faucets. While these elements are necessary to convey the appropriate feeling and association with the CCC, they are basically design features of the overall site. As such, they are not enumerated separately within the nomination. The more notable construction efforts, including the Beach House, Caretaker's House, comfort station, restrooms and picnic shelters, are counted separately. Each of these resources were significant destination points within the park and are more substantially reflective of the CCC's construction efforts.

The overall park, as well as the individual resources, is classified as being in the NPS Rustic style. This style was popularized by the National Park Service in their efforts in park development and is evident in parks nationwide. Although parks of all sizes were created to provide an opportunity for the public to enjoy the wonder of nature, it was recognized that "Wherever groups of people gather together buildings must be provided for their comfort and convenience..."¹ Intent on blending the requisite construction projects, including beach houses, restrooms and picnic shelters, with the natural landscape, the buildings and structures constructed in the NPS Rustic style in Oklahoma were typically low-slung, native stone with dark wood trim. Providing easy direction to the various amenities in the park were signs constructed from wood painted a dark brown and frequently set atop rocks creatively laid to point one in the right direction. While the NPS Rustic style predates the creation of the CCC, it was through the tremendous park development efforts of this New Deal-era program working with the NPS that the style spread from the national parks to newly created state and municipal parks such as Nichols Park. The rocky terrain of the park, especially along the east and south shore lines, lends itself well to the philosophic intent of the NPS Rustic style.

Nichols Lake is the focal point of the park. Originally called Lake Henryetta or the Henryetta Reservoir, the man-made lake covers about seventeen acres and is nearly half a mile in length. The lake is shaped like the upper half of a bent finger. The lake is predominately located in Section 19 with about a third of the lake expanding south into Section 30. From the dam, which extends to the northeast from the feeding line of Coal Creek, the lake spreads in a southeasterly direction. Just past the Beach House, the lake makes a sharp curve to the south. The lake maintains its

¹Gilmore D. Clarke, "Buildings in Public Parks," American Public Buildings of Today, R.W. Sexton, editor, (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, Inc, 1931), 195.

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width until about the place it enters Section 30. It then narrows to a point which continues onward as a stream.

Historically, the park contained two linear areas of CCC development around the lake. Each area contained picnic and other recreational facilities but with separate entrances. The areas were not connected by an improved road within the park, as they are today. The park was also larger than its current size with the CCC developing trails and other landscape elements in these areas which have not remained readily visible. The nominated area retains the majority of notable CCC-built resources and an appreciable degree of feeling and association with the efforts of Roosevelt's tree army.

Off of Lake Road, the park is distinguished from surrounding development on the northwest side by a barrier line of large rocks set on the top of a small, grassy bluff. The line of rocks follow the road to curve around to the unnamed road leading into the park, hereafter referred to as the main north park road (see photograph 1). Marking the entrance proper is an historic Entry Gate (see photographs 2 and 3). The gate consists of a metal pole sign over the road flanked by stone entry markers. On the suspended pole over the road, there is a a wood sign which reads on the front "WELCOME TO NICHOLS PARK" and, on the back "COME BACK SOON". Typical of the CCC, the sign is painted brown with the words inscribed in white. Metal gates swing inward on both of the supporting metal poles. Just to the outside of the south pole is a wooden pole light. Just to the front of the metal poles, on both sides, there are stepped, stone markers. The south marker is composed of three sections: a mid-size section closest to the road, a short middle section and tall section to the far south which originally held a wooden sign suspended above the short middle section. The hook for holding the chain attached to the top of the sign and the square hole for the top brace of the sign remain intact. The north marker has three sections also. The tallest section on the north marker has been awkwardly rebuilt but the original stonework remains apparent in the lower portion of the wall. The middle section is low with the last section being nearly ground level. Extending off the south stone marker is a nonoriginal metal pole fence.

To the front of the entry gate on the south side is a large, double, metal and wood sign (see photograph 4). Although the wood portion of the sign has been repainted, the sign was placed at the entrance of the park in the spring of 1941. The larger portion of the sign now reads "WELCOME TO NICHOLS PARK/North Entrance/This property owned and operated by the city of/HENRYETTA/The City provides no personal supervision, users responsible for own personal wellness/NO FIREWORKS OR FIREARMS ALLOWED/NO BEER-NO DRUGS-NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES/City Ordinances in Effect Violators will be Prosecuted." The smaller section to the south side reads "NOTICE/PARK PATROLLED/Gates Open 5:00 a.m./Gates Closed 10 p.m./Unauthorized Persons in Park After Closing/SUBJECT TO FINES/ SWIMMING NOT AUTHORIZED." In front of the gate on the north side is a stop sign with a mailbox for the caretaker's house located on the corner in front of this.

From the entry gate, the main north park road slants to the southeast before curving more directly south. To the

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northeast of the curve and set some distance from the road are a pair of water tanks and a section of overhead power lines which extend northeast through this section of the park (see photograph 5). The road continues in a southerly direction for a short distance before curving back to the southeasterly slant. Towards the east end of the second curve in the road, there is a drainage channel and culvert on the north side of the road (see photographs 6 and 7). The long, narrow, stone-lined channel extends north from the stone culvert to the top of the bluff before extending to the east in a long line. Concrete has been added to a few places and grass has overgrown other sections of the channel but the channel remains predominately stone. A stone-lined ditch extends to the east from the stone culvert.

A short distance to the east and south of the channel is the historic **CARETAKER'S HOUSE** (see photographs 8 through 11). This building (Resource No. 2) is considered noncontributing due to a loss of historic integrity. Completed by the CCC in 1941, the house has an asphalt-covered, cross-gabled roof and stone foundation. The gable ends have been clad with white composite board. The windows are nonoriginal, two-over-two, metal, hung and the centrally-located wood doors are paneled. There is a massive, stone, gable wall chimney on the south side and an interior, stone, slope chimney on the east side. The original breezeway on the east side of the house has been infilled. Northeast of the house is a metal outbuilding with equipment and other miscellaneous located around and between the house and outbuilding.

Across the road to the south of the house is an historic Boat Landing Sign (see photograph 12). The sign is on the east side of a pot-marked, largely asphalt drive which leads south to the dam. Typical of the CCC, the sign is wood, painted brown, with the words "Boat Landing" inscribed in white. The wooden portion of the sign is set atop a flattened boulder which points south towards the water. The boat landing area has been replaced with a wood fishing pier described below.

The nonhistoric **Fishing Pier** is situated in the far northwest corner of the lake (see photographs 13 and 14). The noncontributing structure (Resource No. 3) extends about twenty-five feet into the lake which, being adjacent to the dam, is the deepest section of water. The pier consists of three roughly equal sections of wood planks set on wooden piers with metal pipe railings on both sides. The shape of the pier is an upside down U. Broken slabs of concrete have been haphazardly placed on the bank between the sections of pier to halt erosion.

Directly to the southwest of the pier is the historic **Dam** which created Nichols Lake (see photographs 15 through 17). This structure (Resource No. 4) is considered contributing due to its critical presence in allowing the creation of the park and as a resource improved by the CCC during the park's period of significance. Built in 1910, the dam measured 343 feet in length along the crest and had a 35 foot concrete core embedded in 5 feet of solid rock with a 35 foot tall embankment. The earthen dam is covered with vegetation. There is a gravel parking lot on the north side of the dam and car tracks across the top to the south side. The spillway on the west side is heavily covered with vegetation. On the south side of the dam, a concrete retaining wall holds the side of the dam.

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A second concrete retaining wall divides the eastern side of the **Stone-lined Creek Bed** which drains the lake (see photographs 18 through 20). The creek bed (Resource No. 5) is considered a contributing structure as it clearly exhibits the efforts of the CCC in improving the infrastructure of the park. The bottom of the creek bed is stone-lined, as well as the sides of the creek. Crossing the creek on the east side is a metal bridge of indeterminate age. Also crossing the creek, towards the middle, is an exposed pipeline pipe.

Back on the main north park road, to the southeast of the Caretaker's House, on the north side of the road, is a tree line above the stone-lined ditch (see photograph 21). The tree line is readily visible as the area to the north from the Caretaker's House is largely void of trees. The systematic planting of the trees is noteworthy as it remains conspicuously present only on this section of the road.

To the southeast of the tree line, on the south side of the road, is a secondary road which slants off to the south before curving eastward to end at an asphalt parking lot. On the northwest corner of the road, just off the main north park road, is a CCC sign (see photograph 22). The wood sign, painted brown, has "FISHING AREA" inscribed on it. The words are painted white. The sign sits atop a flattened boulder with two other large boulders to the immediate south. Preventing unauthorized access to the lake, there are two metal swinging gates located between some trees across the road to the southwest of the sign (see photograph 23). Along the roadway leading to the lakefront, near where the road curves to the east, are stone culverts on either side of the asphalt drive. The trees along the roadway also reveal some of the systematic landscaping efforts of the CCC (see photograph 24). The roadway ends at a black-topped parking area which opens on the east end to the commodious Beach House. The parking lot has been improved with a wood railing fence on the south side. Other modern improvements include parking slots with painted dividers and concrete tire barriers to prevent cars from running into the fence.

On the southwest end of the parking lot, there is a concrete sidewalk which leads to a nonhistoric **Fishing Pier** (see photograph 25). The noncontributing structure (Resource No. 6) is T-shaped and is composed of four equal sections. The first section is the concrete walk which extends from the parking lot to the lake. On both sides of the walk, there are metal pipe railings. At the shoreline, the walk becomes wood with metal railings. With two sections of wood walk extending south over the lake, a fourth section lies east-west to create the cross member of the T. The fourth section is the only one with a corrugated metal roof.

Back at the top of the hill, a larger parking lot for the Beach House is located off the main north park road, directly above the Beach House (see photograph 26). The lot is easily discernible on aerial photographs as it is one of only two areas largely void of trees in this section of the park. The black-topped area is outlined in a combination of large boulders and a stone wall on the east, south and west sides (see photographs 27 and 28). Along the north side of the parking lot is a grassy median containing a flag pole and stone marker. The large flagpole, which has historic precedent but has been apparently improved recently, is centrally located on the median. At the top of its large,

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stepped, concrete base is a metal plaque which reads "In Honor and Remembrance of the heroes and victims of September 11, 2001 and to celebrate the enduring spirit of all Americans. Presented by members of Woodmen of World Life Insurance Society." The historic stone marker (see photographs 29 through 31) located to the east of the flagpole has deteriorated sufficiently so that the inscription is barely readable. Notably, the inscription on the front of the stone is written in Creek. The base of the marker is a series of three, stepped, square, stone sections. The marker is topped by a tablet-shaped stone. The back of the stone notes that the marker was erected in 1942 so it immediately postdates the CCC work in the park.

The parking lot has two entrances from the main north park road, on the northeast and northwest ends of the lot. Located on the east side of each entrance is a CCC sign which reads "BEACH HOUSE" (see photographs 32 and 33). The signs are wood, painted brown with the inscribed words in white. Both signs sit atop a flattened piece of boulder. On the south side of the parking, there are three outlets to the central stairs leading to the Beach House. On the east and west sides, there is a gravel path with a tall stone edging which curves towards the central stair case (see photograph 34). To blend more naturalistically with the setting, the curving main stone stair consists of a series of stone steps and landings (see photographs 35 through 37). With seven stone landings of varying lengths, each set of steps include four wide stone raisers. The stairs have low, stone, wing walls. Newer, flat, metal pole lights have been placed along the stairs to provide lighting.

At the bottom of the hill, is the large CCC-built **Beach House** (see photographs 38 through 40). This building (Resource No. 7) was constructed in 1939-1940 and is a contributing resource. The large building has a cross-gabled, metal-clad roof and a stone foundation. The metal roof is not original but does not detract from the ability of the building to convey its significance. The lower walls are stone with the upper walls and gable ends clad in wood. The long, rectangular openings along the upper wall are wood framed with some having wood dividers. The Beach House consists of a large pavilion area in the main portion of the building with restrooms located on the northwest corner. The interior of the main pavilion includes a concrete floor and wood roof supported by wood trusses (see photographs 41 and 42). The restrooms have tall, stone, wing walls to the front of the entrances, providing privacy to the separate entries. The windows in the restrooms have been boarded and the doors are wood paneled. To the direct south of the restrooms is a square, covered, open area with interior stone walls. Connected to the main building on the east side by a low stone wall is a small, square area, possibly used for storage of small boats or canoes. Originally, this portion of the Beach House had a wood screen sheltering it from the beach area. The low, front-gabled roof of this section of the Beach House has been removed.

Immediately in front of the Beach House is a large, half-circular set of stone stairs (see photograph 43). The stairs consist of seven steps of increasing size. At the base of the first set of steps is a wide stone landing. Also consisting of seven steps, the stairs connect to a low stone wall which encircled the beach area. The sandy area at the Beach House was created by the CCC. The area has returned to a marshy grass but the boulders outlining the beach remain

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nearly intact (see photograph 44). With both the Beach House and beach area in a dilapidated condition, the city of Henryetta is engaging in a project to rehabilitate both the building and beach area by 2007, as well as enhance other amenities in the park.

Southeast of the beach area is Picnic Area #1 (see photographs 45 through 47). The picnic area is in a flat area along the road to a CCC-built picnic shelter on the top of a nearby hill. The road was developed by the CCC, although black-topped at a later date. The picnic area developed subsequently with tables and benches on both sides of the road. It includes five concrete block picnic tables, two concrete block benches and metal playground equipment. Towards the southwest side of this area is a graveled area which is used as a boat landing with three more cinder block picnic tables being located to the east side.

On the southeast side of the picnic area, along the road, there is a culvert near the base of the hill leading to the picnic shelter (see photograph 48). To the southwest of this, scattered along the hill, is an historic picnic area (Picnic Area #2) (see photographs 48 and 49). The area includes four picnic tables constructed of stone supports and concrete tops. Some of the supports have been replaced by cinder blocks and some of the tops are gone from the benches.

Near the top of the road, in a clear area, is one of the two **Picnic Shelters** built by the CCC in 1940 (see photographs 50 and 51). This structure (Resource No. 8) is contributing despite the replacement of the entire roof. The structure is set almost perpendicular to the road. The shelter has a stone foundation and a metal-clad, side-gabled roof with exposed wood rafters. The roof of the structure, including the roof trusses, was replaced in recent years following a fire set by vandals, a problem which has plagued the park since its earliest days. The walls of the shelter are stone with massive, stone, gable end chimneys on either side. Off the west side of the picnic shelter is an uncovered terrace area with a stone floor and low stone walls (see photograph 52). The stone walls and floor remain in fairly good condition. On either side of the interior are wide, stone fireplaces with stone ledges to either side (see photograph 53).

The shelter and the nearby historic picnic areas were sited along the crest of a bluff that slopes down to the lake shore. Originally designed to have attractive sight-lines toward the lake, much of this has been obscured by secondary growth of trees and other vegetation. The sloping ground is marked by naturally-occurring rock outcrops. This natural landscape lends itself well to the naturalized landscape design of the park structures.

To the south and east of the Picnic Shelter is a large picnic area (see photographs 54 through 55B). Picnic Area #3 is outlined on the north side by large boulders. Spread around the area are six picnic tables (see photographs 56 and 57). Each table has stone supports and concrete tops. Several of the tables have fire pits located near them. Along side the fire pits are the remains of trash receptacles. These round bins were buried in the ground and had hinged, metal lids. The fire pits consist of a U-shaped setting of stone with a heavy metal grate. The stone chosen for the fire pits was typically weathered, matching the natural outcrops of stone that occurred along the slope leading to the lake.

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The six tables are in varying conditions with pieces and sections being broken off. There are trees located in proximity to each table to provide shade. There are three extant water faucets, cleverly drilled into large boulders, that remain functional (see photograph 58).

Southeast of the Picnic Shelter and connected to it by a gravel road is the historic **Comfort Station** (see photographs 59 through 61). This contributing building (Resource No. 9) was completed by the CCC in 1940 and is surrounded by the picnic area described above. The building has a stone foundation and a metal-clad, side-gabled roof with exposed rafters. The walls, including the gable ends, are stone. The wood windows have been boarded or are open. The windows are predominately double with a triple window located on the west side. The doors are wood slab. Tall, stone, wing walls provide privacy to both the men's entrance on the southwest corner and the women's on the northeast corner.

Returning again to the main north park road and to the east of the Beach House parking lot, on the south side of the road, is a small turnaround area (see photograph 62). This area is outlined in boulders with a metal swinging gate on the east side to prevent traffic from proceeding further into the park. Farther to the east, along the main north park road, there is a Soap Box Derby Track. The track was apparently built in 1965 and extends about 700 feet in a straight line from the road. The track is not visible on the USGS map but is on more recent aerials of the area (see district map). The main road then continues on in a southeasterly direction to near where the Indian Nation Turnpike cut through the original park area in the mid-1960s. The original main road then continued in a southeasterly direction towards the section road on the far east side of the park. Historically, near where the turnpike is today, there was a road which turned off the main road in a half-circle towards the southwest with a loop on the end. This extant road is well-defined on the 1941 USDA aerial of the area. On both the top and bottom sides of the loop, there are stone culverts, illustrating the CCC's efforts at improving the park infrastructure (see photographs 64 and 65). Off the west side of the loop, is the Comfort Station and picnic area described in the paragraph above (see photographs 55B and 63). The main park road now extends off the bottom segment of the historic loop to circle around the southeast tip of the lake and connect with the historic park area on the south side of the lake. The northeastern section of the road was black-topped by the early 1960s with the remainder of the road being improved by the mid-1970s. While this section of the road was likely a trail initiated by the CCC, the paving and clearing of the area occurred in the early 1960s with the construction of the Indian Nation Turnpike (see photographs 66 and 67). Towards the middle of this section of road, there is a large concrete culvert. On either side of the culvert is stonework indicative of work by the CCC (see photographs 68 and 69).

The nonhistoric road links directly with the historic road on the south side of the park. This road originally terminated on the east side in a turnaround parking lot which is still outlined with a boulder barrier (see photograph 70). On the east side of the barrier is a single, historic, stone picnic table. Across the road to the south are two nonhistoric, cinder block picnic tables (see photograph 71).

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Farther to the northwest, on the south side of the historic road, are the separate **Women's and Men's Latrines** (see photographs 72 through 74). Completed in 1939, these two contributing buildings (Resource Nos. 10 and 11) are located directly east-west of each other. The restrooms are nearly identical, small, stone buildings. Both buildings have asphalt-covered, side-gabled roofs with exposed rafters and beams. The buildings have stone foundations. The wood windows on the west elevations are boarded. The wood doors are paneled and located on the east elevations. The gable ends are clad with vertical wood matching the boards on the windows. As with the Beach House and Comfort Station on the north side, tall stone wing walls provide privacy to the entries. Stone walks encircle the buildings. A low rock wall creates a perimeter around the area with stone steps from the road leading towards the restrooms (see photographs 74 and 75).

Across the road to the north of the restrooms is the second **Picnic Shelter** (see photographs 76 and 77). This contributing structure (Resource No. 12) was originally the Boy Scout Cabin at the park. The original building was constructed in about the mid-1930s apparently by the National Youth Administration (NYA) to facilitate use of the park by the local Boy Scout organizations. Prior to the CCC remaking the building into a structure, the resource was heavily vandalized with damage to the roof and windows. In 1940, the CCC opened the long sides of the building and added massive, stone chimneys to the short sides. The structure has a nonhistoric, asphalt-covered, hipped roof and a stone foundation. Notably, the original stonework on the walls, not constructed by the CCC, is much rougher than on the other resources in the park. The long sides of the rectangular building have three large openings in the middle and two smaller openings to the outside. Dividing the area are double wood posts set on concrete blocks which support the interior wood trusses. The edges of the openings are quoined in stonework by the CCC. On the inside, the floor of the shelter is concrete and there are stone fireplaces on either end (see photograph 78).

To the south, east and northwest of the Picnic Shelter is Picnic Area #4. This large picnic area includes a CCC-built water faucet, as well as nonhistoric gas pipeline and metal playground equipment, directly in front of the picnic shelter (see photograph 79). A gravel parking lot is located directly to the south of the picnic shelter (see photograph 83). Farther to the southeast, and scattered around the area, are four stone picnic tables and three cinder block picnic tables (see photographs 80 through 82). There are two stone grills/fire pits and a single faucet in the area. To the northwest of the Picnic Shelter, Picnic Area #4 continues with one historic stone picnic table and two nonhistoric cinder block picnic tables. The overall area is outlined with a boulder barrier along the west, south and east sides (see photographs 83 and 84).

Off the west side of the picnic area, is a gravel road which winds around the camping area located on the far west side of this section of the park (see photograph 85). On the northeast corner of the intersection of the gravel road with the main south park road, set inside the boulder barrier encircling the picnic area, is a CCC sign for the camping area (see photograph 86). The wood sign, painted brown, has the words "CAMPING AREA" inscribed on it in white. Unlike the other signs on the north side of the park, this sign is set on wood posts rather than rocks.

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Across the gravel road to the west of Picnic Area #4 is the first of eight camping sites. Each site consists of a picnic table and a wood-framed parking spot (see photograph 87). The various sites are located along the gravel drive which extends off of the main south park road to curve northwesterly towards the dam (see photograph 88). Only one camp site retains its historic stone and concrete picnic table. The other seven sites have painted, cinder block tables. A boulder barrier separates the camping area along the south side from the adjacent main south park road (see photograph 89).

A boulder barrier also runs along the west side of the camping area which also serves as the perimeter of the park along Lake Road. The barrier is part of the South Entry Gate. Nearly identical to the North Entry Gate, the South Entry Gate includes a central metal sign, stone entry markers, metal and wood signs and boulder fences on both sides (see photographs 90 and 91). Centrally located adjacent to the road are two metal poles with a third pole suspended above holding a wooden sign which reads on the front "WELCOME TO NICHOLS PARK" and, on the back, "COME BACK SOON." Typical of the CCC, the sign is painted brown with the words inscribed in white. Metal gates swing outward on both of the supporting metal poles. Just to the outside of the north pole is a nonhistoric wooden pole light and, attached to the south pole, a speed limit sign. Nearly adjacent to the metal poles, on both sides, there are stepped, stone entry markers. The south marker is composed of two sections: a mid-size section closest to the road and tall section to the far south which originally held a wooden sign suspended above the short middle section. The square hole for the top brace of the sign remains intact. The north marker has two sections also. The tallest section on the north marker is adjacent to the road and is nearly the same width as that of the south wall. The shorter second section is much narrower. Curving towards Lake Road off the markers on both sides is a low barrier composed of various sized boulders. To the direct front of the entry, just off of Lake Road, are two stone culverts (see photographs 92 and 93).

To the front of the entry gate on the south side is a historic metal and wood sign (see photograph 92). The larger section of the sign reads "WELCOME TO NICHOLS PARK/South Entrance/This property owned and operated by the city of/HENRYETTA/The City provides no personal supervision, users responsible for own personal wellness/NO FIREWORKS OR FIREARMS ALLOWED/NO BEER-NO DRUGS-NO ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES/City Ordinances in Effect Violators will be Prosecuted." The smaller section to the south side reads "NOTICE/PARK PATROLLED/Gates Open 5:00 a.m./Gates Closed 10 p.m./Unauthorized Persons in Park After Closing/SUBJECT TO FINES/ SWIMMING NOT AUTHORIZED." Behind sign and the south boulder fence is a fire hydrant and gas meter.

While the park is no longer used as heavily as it was during the 1940s and 1950s, it remains open to the public with a caretaker onsite. Hiking, picnicking and fishing remain viable activities at the park, however, swimming is forbidden at this time. The beach at the Beach House, created by the CCC, has returned to a marshy grass with the Beach House in a declined condition, suffering from lack of use and vandalism. The city is currently working on a project

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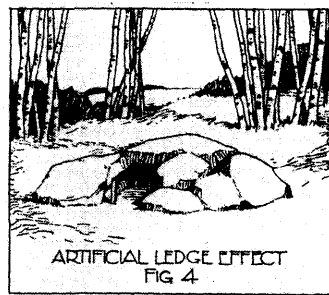
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to rehabilitate the Beach House. The other CCC buildings, consisting of the Caretaker's House, comfort station and two restrooms, and the two CCC-built structures, the picnic shelters, are in fair to good condition with some graffiti ornamenting the walls. The roofs of two buildings and one of the structures have been clad with metal and one structure has a fairly new, asphalt-covered roof but these material changes do not interfere with the resources' ability to convey their significance. The majority of the park, including picnic, camping and parking areas, remain outlined by the systematic siting of trees and rocks. Many of the historic elements, such as markers, picnic tables, benches, fire pits and water faucets, remain in fair to good condition scattered about the park. Newer objects, including cinder block picnic tables and benches, have been added with minimal impact on the park's integrity.

Despite the decline of some of the individual resources, the park overall maintains a fairly high degree of integrity. As a site, the park in its entirety constitutes the key contributing element in the district. Overall, the park site maintains a remarkable degree of feeling and association with the CCC's park development efforts. Of the historic buildings and structures of notable size within the park, only the Caretaker's House is considered noncontributing due to insensitive alterations. The only other nonhistoric elements in the park of note are the two fishing piers. The piers are not particularly large in size, although the pier at the historic fishing area is visible on the aerial photographs of the park. The piers are of inconsequential substance to interfere with the park's conveyance of its historic significance as an excellent example of the CCC's park development efforts at the municipal level in Henryetta, Oklahoma.

Illustration from "Camp Stoves and Fireplaces," a publication issued to CCC camps by the Forest Service illustrating proper designs for park infrastructure in 1937.



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SUMMARY

Nichols Park, located in Henryetta, Okmulgee County, Oklahoma, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the development of entertainment and recreation facilities by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) during the years 1938-1941. It was during these latter years of the Great Depression that the CCC, working with the city of Henryetta and the National Park Service (NPS), developed Nichols Park, a 640-acre recreational center, around the town's original water reservoir. The facility is an excellent example of the CCC's park development efforts at the municipal level. Notably, the park was almost strictly a CCC project with no direct involvement from another popular New Deal relief agency, the Works Progress Administration. The National Youth Administration (NYA) did initiate clearing of the site prior to the arrival of the CCC but the majority of permanent improvements were accomplished by the CCC. The park is also significant under Criterion C as an outstanding example of the architecture and landscape architecture espoused by the CCC working under the auspices of the NPS during the time period and implemented at a municipal park.

BACKGROUND

Located in the Creek Nation of Indian Territory, Henryetta was founded in 1900, largely in response to railroad construction by the Saint Louis and San Francisco (Frisco) Railway Company. By the fall of 1900, the Frisco had trains coming and going through the new town. Four years later, the town paid the Missouri, Oklahoma and Gulf Railway \$30,000 to extend a line through the community on its track from Muskogee to Durant. Importantly, this link provided access to the Gulf of Mexico. Unlike the Frisco, which handled both passengers and freight, the Missouri, Oklahoma and Gulf Railway was a freight line specializing in hauling coal, sand and grain, among other commodities. With both abundant quantities of coal and grain, the railroad was vital to Henryetta's growth for decades.²

The ready availability of coal in the Henryetta area was one of the main reasons the Frisco constructed a line through the town. In addition to being "clean," the coal in the area had a low sulfur content, allowing it to be burned for both industrial and residential uses. "King Coal" formed one of the dominant economic supports of the community into the 1950s. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the majority of coal was surface mined. In about 1909, underground mining became prevalent with mines extending beneath the town itself. By 1919, over 4,000 men

²The Daily Free-Lance, (Henryetta, Oklahoma) 22 November 1951. See also Dr. Alyson Greiner, et al., "Reconnaissance Level Survey of Four East Central Oklahoma Towns: Henryetta, Holdenville, Wetumka and Wewoka." (Available Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 2002), 203 and 213.

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mined coal from thirty-nine mines in the Henryetta vicinity. From 1902 through 1955, it was estimated the area produced twenty-five million tons of coal with over a million tons along being extracted in the banner years of 1918 and 1948.³

Another mining-related industry which enhanced Henryetta's economy for decades was zinc smelting. The Eagle-Picher Company, with extensive holdings in the lead and zinc mines of Northeastern Oklahoma, opened a smelter near Henryetta in 1915. By 1916, five different zinc companies were operating in the Henryetta area. During the first half of the twentieth century, lead and zinc concentrates were primarily used for arms and munitions but were also used in the production of toys, coins, roofing, surgical equipment, linoleum, interior paints, ceramics and pharmaceutical products, among a host of other items. Similar to the coal mines, the smelters were an important economic presence in Henryetta through the 1950s when the combination of lessening demand and higher mining costs began to cause the lead and zinc industry in Oklahoma to decline before ceasing operations completely in the 1970s.⁴

Also in the teens, Henryetta's oil and gas fields began attracting attention. While not providing for a major oil boom as in other parts of Oklahoma, the gas wells spurred the industrial growth of the town by providing a cheap fuel. With the "...greatest dry gas..." field in the United States, Henryetta's gas wells supplied the area's six zinc smelters and three refineries, as well as the cotton gins, mills and other local factories in 1919. Ten years later, the gas pool was one of the primary reasons for the Pittsburg Plate Glass Company's decision to construct a two-million-dollar plant in Henryetta. The opening of the glass company plant was another monumental event for Henryetta, particularly economically. The manufacture of glass continued at the same site to the present time and the plant has remained one of the leading employer's in the community for decades.⁵

As with the rest of Oklahoma, agriculture also provided a major revenue source for Henryetta. Corn, wheat, oats and other grains flourished in the area, as well as cotton and all types of root crops for many years. Dairies and chicken farms, as well as cattle operations, were also found in the vicinity. By 1931, the community boasted three cotton gins, one cotton oil mill, one flour mill and two creameries, among other agriculture-related businesses. However, as with much of the rest of Oklahoma and the nation, soil exhaustion and overproduction combined to devastate farming

³Ibid. See also The Daily Oklahoman, (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma), 21 September 1919; and, Greiner, "Reconnaissance," 207-209.

⁴Ibid. See also Greiner, "Reconnaissance," 209-210.

⁵Ibid. See also The Daily Oklahoman, 21 September 1919; and, Greiner, "Reconnaissance," 210-211.

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in the area within a few decades of the town's founding.⁶

Declines in both agriculture and coal mining became apparent in the 1920s. Coal mines throughout southeast Oklahoma were adversely impacted by falling demand after 1920 as railroads turned to oil rather than steam to move their locomotives. Following the 1929 collapse of the Wall Street Stock Market, and despite the opening of the Pittsburg Plate Glass Company plant, economic conditions in Henryetta, Oklahoma and the nation rapidly declined, setting off the worst depression in American history. The Great Depression lasted for over ten years and resulted in prolonged massive unemployment. Following the Wall Street collapse, the recession steadily grew for three years, culminating in 1932. While conditions did not improve after 1932, they ceased the marked downward spiral of the preceding years. The economic stimulus provided by President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal policies and wartime industries finally brought the country out of the depression by about the early 1940s.⁷

During the depression, both rural and urban areas suffered. Unemployment in urban areas created an unprecedented dependence on public welfare which city and state governments were unable to maintain. This inability to sustain urban families resulted in significant homelessness and malnutrition across the nation. Rural areas in the South and Midwest were doubly burdened, enduring not only economic hard times but also a decade-long drought. The "Dust Bowl" of the 1930s, comprising a line of states from the Dakotas to Texas including Oklahoma, devastated farming conditions. Due to declining domestic and foreign markets, overproduction of crops continued to lower farm good prices. In a nationwide trend, many farmers unable to make a living took to the road, searching for a more profitable future.⁸

As a predominately agricultural state, the depression of the 1930s particularly devastated Oklahoma. During the three year period of 1936 to 1938, 500 to 600 hours each year of "sun-obscuring dust" ravaged the southern plains state. By 1939, due to drought conditions and erosion, it was estimated that twenty-five percent of Oklahoma's soil was lost to production. Furthering Oklahoma's agriculture crisis were the large number of tenant farmers in the state. In 1930, sixty-two percent of Oklahoma farmers were tenant farmers, representing the highest rate of tenancy in the Midwest. Significantly, the tenancy rate in the southeast Oklahoma counties such as Okmulgee County averaged ten to fifteen percent higher than the rest of the state. With no tangible ties to the land, tenant farmers were essentially a

⁶The Daily Oklahoman, 21 September 1919 and 10 May 1931. See also Greiner, "Reconnaissance," 211.

⁷Richard N. Current, et al, American History: A Survey, 2 vols. (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 2:703-705.

⁸Ibid., 708.

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dispossessed people searching for sufficient economic means to subsist. Thus, they moved frequently and often lived at below poverty standards. Their plight was compounded during the depression years by the drought conditions which reduced farm incomes even further, leaving them with little choice but to resort to the relief system or migration out of Oklahoma.⁹

Agriculture, however, was not the only industry in the state greatly impacted by the depression. The oil market, another major economic force in the state, collapsed as factories and mines shut down. The price of oil fell from a \$1.30 a barrel in 1930 to about a \$.01 per barrel in 1932. This resulted in the closing of wells at an unprecedented rate, 21,603 wells in 1931 alone. Statewide, oil and natural gas production fell by about thirty percent, a significant economic drop. Falling prices of coal, also devastated by declining demand, resulted in the closure of mines throughout southeast Oklahoma. Unemployment in the state was at an all-time high. By May 1936, 242,000 workers statewide were without jobs. Due to the inclement economic conditions, migration out of Oklahoma became so intense the term "Okie" became a popular name for the dispossessed workers searching for work in other states, particularly California.¹⁰

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

In 1931, conditions reached a point in Henryetta that nearly 500 men, women and children staged a hunger-march in mid-July. Although the march ended peaceably when area merchants and citizens handed out food and money, it served as an impetus for development of a local "Henryetta Work Club" to provide relief for local unemployment men through work on public projects, including building a road to Lake Henryetta, the new city reservoir built in the late 1920s, and cleaning up the streets and alleys. Local efforts such as these, however, were unsuccessful in providing sufficient relief to the growing swell of needy.¹¹

⁹Richard W. Fossey, "'Talking Dust Bowl Blues" A Study of Oklahoma's Cultural Identity During the Great Depression," The Chronicles of Oklahoma LV:1 (Spring 1977), 14, 22. See also W. David Baird, "Final Report: WPA Structures Thematic Survey (Phase III), (Stillwater, Oklahoma: Oklahoma State University, 1987): 5.

¹⁰Arrell Morgan Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries, (2nd ed., Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 220. See also James Ware, "The Sooner NRA: New Deal Recovery in Oklahoma," The Chronicles of Oklahoma LIV:3 (Fall 1976), 341; and, Baird, "Final Report," 5.

¹¹The Daily Oklahoman, 20 July 1931.

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In efforts to stimulate the national economy and assist citizens in distress, President Roosevelt legislated twenty-nine different acts between 1933 and 1939. The bills were structured to sustain various parts of the economy. The majority of acts sought to provide some type of relief for the unemployed. Authorized less than a month after Roosevelt's first inauguration in March 1933, the Emergency Conservation Work Act (ECW) created the first alphabet relief program of the New Deal. While the ECW was the technical name of the program, it was commonly referred to as the Civilian Conservation Corps or CCC, a name popularized by Roosevelt as early as March 21, 1933 in a Congressional address. The work program created by the ECW had two primary goals. First, the program sought to provide employment for 17- to 26-year-old, unmarried, needy males and, in doing so, relieve some of the pressure on local and state economies by removing these men from the labor pool. The ECW also sought to conserve the country's natural resources through the

construction, maintenance, and carrying on of works of a public nature in connection with the forestation of lands belonging to the United States or to the several States which are suitable for timber production, the prevention of forest fires, floods and soil erosion, plant pest and disease control, the construction, maintenance or repair of paths, trails and fire lanes in the national parks and national forests, and such other work on the public domain, national and State, and Government reservations incidental to or necessary in connection with any projects of the character enumerated, as the President may determine to be desirable.¹²

Unemployed men across the nation rapidly enrolled in the new work program which paid on average \$30 per month. Of this, the majority were to be given between \$5 and \$8 with the remaining money sent home to their families. The enrollment period was for six months with the opportunity to re-enroll for up to two full years. Although initially restricted to young men, in May 1933, the program expanded to include veterans who were not required to meet age restrictions. The men lived in military-style camps ran by the War Department which included barracks, recreation buildings, education buildings and infirmaries. While many of the camps were located at the project site, particularly the park projects, some camps were located in the vicinity on sites donated by interested persons.¹³

Within Oklahoma, the CCC undertook a number of projects, including soil conservation, forestry and park

¹²Conrad L. Wirth, "Civilian Conservation Corps Program of the United States Department of the Interior, March 1933 to June 30, 1943," (A Report to Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, January 1944), 15-16.

¹³Reid A. Holland, "The Civilian Conservation Corps in Oklahoma, 1933-1942," (M.A. Thesis, Oklahoma State University, 1969),12-23.

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development. While the soil conservation and forestry projects were critical in aiding the recovery of Oklahoma's depleted land, they were not as publically visible as the park development projects. Notably, all of the park projects accomplished by the CCC were undertaken in cooperation with the National Park Service (NPS). Within six weeks of the CCC's creation, the first park project in Oklahoma was underway at Platt National Park (now Chickasaw National Recreation Area). The CCC continued their work at Platt National Park through 1940, the longest continuous CCC park project in the state. Also in 1933, the Oklahoma legislature appropriated \$90,000 for acquisition of land for its first state park, Lake Murray (NR 2001). Two years later, the state legislature appropriated \$25,000 for creation of a State Park Commission. This federally-encouraged administrative mechanism allowed broader park development efforts within the state. Working with the NPS planners, Oklahoma park officials quickly proposed seven park sites that they estimated would be accessible to 60 percent of the state's population and within a 75 miles radius of population centers. By the end of the program in July 1942, the CCC aided in the development of Oklahoma's initial ten state parks, all of which remain recreational centers within the state to the present time.

Municipal parks were also an early focus of the CCC's park development efforts. By October 1933, a CCC camp was located at Wintersmith Park (NR 2000) in Ada. Additional municipal park projects were undertaken at the state's two major metropolitan centers, including Lincoln, Northwest (Will Rogers), and Grand Boulevard metropolitan parks in Oklahoma City and Mohawk Park in Tulsa. Smaller towns, such as Perry and Ponca City in north-central Oklahoma, also benefitted from the CCC's park development efforts.¹⁴

As with the other New Deal relief programs, communities across the state, such as Henryetta, actively vied for designation of a nearby CCC project. In addition to the lasting benefit of whatever project was undertaken, the community also gained immediate economic boon from the presence of the camp. By 1935, Henryetta was seeking the newly allotted CCC soil erosion camp for Okmulgee County. Losing out to Morris for the soil erosion camp, Henryetta also had to endure its other competitor's good fortune as the CCC were rushing work on building a camp at Okmulgee to begin work at the state's ninth state park, Lake Okmulgee.¹⁵

Although the CCC program was highly popular at all levels by mid-1935, President Roosevelt, due to budgetary concerns, initiated a major reduction effort aimed at the CCC program. Seeking to close or cancel 489 CCC camps by January 1, 1936, the President sought additional nationwide reductions to bring the total number of camps to 1,456 in April 1936. Despite strong opposition to the reduction effort within Congressional members of his own party who

¹⁴John C. Paige, The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History, (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1985), 198.

¹⁵The Daily Oklahoman, 9 June 1935 and 16 June 1935.

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feared political reprisal at the polls later that year, Roosevelt continued to press forward the reduction by announcing the CCC would no longer receive funds from relief appropriations but instead, in a substantial blow, would be included in regular War Department appropriations only in early March 1936. Congress, however, remained unconvinced of the political desirability of the reduction effort.¹⁶

In mid-March 1936, a Democratic Congressman from Oklahoma, Jack Nichols, sent letters to all of the other Democratic Congressmen asking for their presence at a meeting on March 20, 1936, to develop a plan to halt the reduction effort. With over two hundred Democrats attending the meeting, it was decided that, acting as a bloc, the Congressmen would "...force the continuation of the CCC at its present strength of 2,158 camps and 400,000 enrollees." Additionally, the politicians determined that the CCC should receive supplemental funding from part of Roosevelt's new \$1.5 relief bill. Representative Nichols, along with others he appointed to a committee, were given responsibility for calling on Roosevelt and informing him of the Congressional plans.¹⁷

Faced with a "...revolt of such a substantial section of the House Democratic strength....," Roosevelt dropped his reduction effort, calling for all existing camps to be maintained until their work projects were completed. Notably, after this point, the Congressman from the Second District of Oklahoma became a champion of the CCC, as well as soil conservation, old age pensions, Indians and civil aviation. Born in Joplin, Missouri, on August 31, 1896, Jack Nichols, a trial lawyer from Eufaula, Oklahoma, served in Congress from 1935 until 1943. Prior to becoming a lawyer, Nichols served with the 19th Infantry at Camp Travis, Texas during World War I; owned and operated the first drive-in filling station in Eufaula; was president of the Metropolitan School, Opera House and Church Company of Muskogee, Oklahoma; was in the municipal bond business with then-Lieutenant Government Martin E. Trapp; and, bought and sold oil leases in Eastern Colorado. Nichols resigned from Congress in 1943 to become vice president of Transcontinental and Western Air Incorporated (TWA). Two years later, on November 5, Nichols was killed in a plane crash while on TWA business in Africa.¹⁸

Located within Oklahoma's Second Congressional District, Henryetta continued to pursue federal relief projects to

¹⁶John A. Salmond, The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal Case Study, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1967), 64-66.

¹⁷Ibid., 66-67.

¹⁸Short Biography of Jack Nichols, attached to letter from Chloe Nichols Spencer to James T. White & Company Publishers, dated May 19, 1949. (From the Collection of the Honorable John C. "Jack" Nichols, Box 1, Folder 3, Congressional Archives, The Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma).

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combat the harsh economic times, as well as bolster their community amenities. In July 1937, plans were proposed for construction of a pool at the "old lake" by the National Youth Administration (NYA). The NYA was a federal relief program aimed at providing parttime employment opportunities to students, as well as set up technical training programs and provide aid to jobless youth. The NYA operated under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration and typically paid students a wage of 30 cents per hour with a 30 hour monthly maximum. The NYA supervisor in Henryetta, Henry Littlefield, anticipated the pool could be built within a month, if the Henryetta City Council approved the project. NYA Workers had already erected the Boy Scout Cabin, also called a mess hall, at the lake with additional construction projects proposed, including seven Scout cabins and, related to the pool, bathing houses, diving boards and a sand beach.¹⁹

Apparently failing to gain approval, possibly at the federal level, the NYA pool project for Henryetta's old city reservoir failed to materialize. The following month, a new secretary of the local Chamber of Commerce arrived in Henryetta from Woodward. Dwight Wolfinger immediately initiated meetings with committee members to "...become more acquainted with the desires and wishes of the citizens in regard to a program which will advance Henryetta further along the road to progress." By the end of August 1937, Wolfinger announced his program of city advancement at a chamber membership meeting. In addition to a "dream highway" which would extend from Tulsa through Henryetta and then on to McAlester, Texarkana and eventually to New Orleans via the "Rainbow Highway," Wolfinger "...added a recreational center to the group of objectives he was outlining...". The center would include a race track, rodeo ground, ball diamond, swimming pool and beach.²⁰

On the first day of October 1937, the local newspaper carried a brief front page article noting that a decision to move the CCC camp from Okmulgee to Henryetta would not be made until after the first of November. Notably, officials in Washington "...would not comment on whether the move had been asked by any of the state's congressional delegation." The role of Congressional pressure in Henryetta receiving a CCC project was critical. Although Congress passed the Civilian Conservation Corps Act in 1937, which extended the program for an additional three years, funding problems caused another major reduction in the number of camps and enrollees throughout 1937 into 1938. Due to these nationwide reductions in camps and personnel, the CCC had been curtailing their municipal park efforts for several years to concentrate their increasingly limited resources on national and larger state parks. That the Henryetta park was ultimately named "Jack Nichols Recreation Park" is mute testimony to the efforts by a certain Congressman from the Second District in securing the project for his constituency.

A banner headline announced the federal decision to build a park at Henryetta's old lake on November 3, 1937.

¹⁹The Daily Free-Lance, (Henryetta, Oklahoma), 7 July 1937.

²⁰Ibid., 2 August 1937 and 27 August 1937.

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Construction of the proposed 520 acre recreation center by the CCC would be overseen by the National Park Service at an estimated cost of \$250,000. As with other New Deal relief projects, the park, once completed, would become the property of the city. The center initially was to include a sand beach able to accommodate 500 and including a bath house and water carnival equipment; boat houses with boat racing provisions; a band shell; stadium; horse race and athletic tracks; rodeo grounds; stables; softball and baseball diamonds; tennis courts; bridle paths; and, automobile drives. Amenities for picnickers and campers were to include stone tables, ovens and city water taps. It was estimated that 200 men would be working for two years on the project. In return for the federal assistance, the city of Henryetta was required to provide \$5,000 to purchase an additional 350 acres of land around the city-owned reservoir and, subsequently, pay for some buildings materials. The Chamber of Commerce, with Dwight Wolfinger at the head, was tasked with the job of securing the funding. The campaign for funds was anticipated to take less than a week as, in addition to attracting "...many thousands..." of visitors, the project was also expected to result in "...excellent recreational facilities for Henryetta and (the) immediate environs."²¹

Endorsed by both the Henryetta Cental Labor Union and Painter's Local Union No. 506, the needed funds were quickly raised. Within a month of the project announcement, 188 acres had been purchased, bringing the total acreage to 358. Although the city had options on all the needed property at that time, it was unknown when the land acquisition would be complete as some of the titles would have to go through the courts to be transferred. By December 27, 1937, a total of 560 acres had been acquired with "...only the beginning of construction work,..., (lying) between the possibility and realty (sic) of the park for Henryetta." The following day, an additional 80 acres was purchased, bringing the proposed park site to 640 acres or an entire one square mile. While the previous amount of land was sufficient to guarantee the project, the additional land would "...enable members of the park board to construct and beautify a park much larger than is owned by the majority of the cities of the state."²²

Shortly after the start of the New Year, city officials were informed that the CCC's next project period did not start until April 1, 1938. Raymond Higgins, the NPS' inspector at Oklahoma City, further explained that the forms to apply for a CCC camp for the new period had not yet arrived in Oklahoma City and, as soon as they did, he would send "...a supply..." to Henryetta. The application forms arrived in Henryetta by the first week of February 1938. On February 5, Higgins himself arrived in Henryetta to assist "...in filling out the voluminous camp application blank." Final touches to the application were completed after Higgins' departure Saturday afternoon with the completed form expected to be delivered to Higgins on Monday morning. Higgins would then submit the application to CCC officials

²¹Ibid., 3 November 1937 and 5 November 1937.

²²Ibid., 11 November 1937, 19 November 1937, 2 December 1937, 27 December 1937 and 28 December 1937.

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in Washington, D.C., where a final determination on the project would be made.²³

On March 1, 1938, the local newspaper received a telegram from Congressman Nichols informing it the park project had been approved and work would start after April 1. Upon hearing the announcement, the local postmaster Major L.F. George, who along with others through the American Exchange Company donated a site for the proposed camp on the north side of Henryetta, noted that weeks earlier Nichols had assured him that the project would be approved. George further noted that "Much of the credit for Henryetta's camp may be given to (Nichols),..., for it was through the efforts of the second district representative that it was possible for Henryetta to receive this project in the face of a retrenchment program in this type of work throughout the United States." Notably, in the far left column of the same front page, it was noted that Henryetta should "...do something right nice for Congressman Jack Nichols, who didn't let it hit the ground after the park application landed in Washington." The same article notes the contributions of Major L. Frank George in championing the project at the local level and ends with the question "...do you remember whether Jack Nichols or Frank George ever had a park named for them?"²⁴

Although the CCC period began April 1, actual construction on the park would not begin for some time. On April 5, 1938, the city council passed an ordinance creating a park board. The three-man, mayoral-appointed commission was to oversee all aspects of all the city-owned parks in Henryetta. In addition to the CCC park, Henryetta boasted at least three other parks, a city park, a roadside park located in the Key-Whitenton Addition on the north side of town and Inspiration Point Park, an NYA project started in September 1937. The ordinance, which included hiring and land acquisition authority, was based on Tulsa's park commission law. Two days later, the work program for the recreation center was announced. The program listed twenty-two jobs in order of priority with an estimate on the size and amount of labor needed to accomplish them. Heading the list was the need to fence the park area which was estimated to require four miles of fencing and 2,000 man-days to complete. Other jobs, in order of importance, were: one miles of park roads; bank sloping; fifty acres of picnic area development; picnic shelter construction; 50 tables and benches; 50 fireplaces; 35 garbage containers; two miles of foot-trails; water supply system; one latrine; sewerage disposal system; combination boat and bathing building; two parking areas; dam repair; beach development; 20 signs and markers; entrance portal; one mile of road obliteration; 80 acres of landscaping undifferentiated; 50 acres of seeding and sodding; and, planting 15,000 trees. Skilled labor was to be used only on the building of the picnic shelters, tables and benches, latrine and boat and bathing house.²⁵

²³Ibid., 12 January 1938 and 6 February 1938.

²⁴Ibid., 1 March 1938.

²⁵Ibid., 26 July 1937, 14 September 1937, 28 October 1937, 16 December 1937, 5 April 1938 and 7 April 1938.

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Work on the CCC camp, to be located on the northwest side of the city, began at the end of April 1938. The building materials and supplies for the camp buildings were trucked from Stigler in Haskell County, where the CCC had recently closed a camp. By the first week of May, five buildings at the camp had been erected with several more in various stages. The city had also completed water lines to the site with city workmen drilling an opening into an abandoned mine shaft to be used for camp sewerage disposal. Following completion of the site, CCC workers would be tasked with beautification of the grounds by planting trees and plants.²⁶

On May 13, 1938, several visitors to Henryetta shed more light on the project and camp status. Most notable related to the park was C.E. Krueger, a landscape architect from Tulsa. Krueger was in the process of "...completing drawings and plans for the center." Also in Henryetta was L.M. Watkins, an NPS employee, who indicated the CCC camp would "...likely be operational by July 1" and Captain J.D. Linton, with the Oklahoma district CCC, who explained the details of the various competitive bid opportunities for camp services, including laundry, shoe repair, perishable groceries, dairy products and bakery items. Duke Burgess, the construction superintendent for the state CCC, was then at the camp site situating the various building locations.²⁷

Picking up a tradition that would endure for several years, plans for a major 4th of July celebration in Henryetta were announced in mid-June. In addition to various parades and sporting events, a basket lunch was planned at the park site with different areas marked off to represent the various towns of the "Henryetta district." During the afternoon hours, Congressman Nichols, "...patron of the recreation park project," would also deliver an address at the park with the finale to consist of the mandatory fireworks. In preparation for the big event, youths working for the NYA cleared underbrush and stones and built footpaths from the road leading to the picnic grounds. Electric lights were hung in the picnic area by the Public Service Company and the city water department arranged for drinking water facilities. Areas were also cleared for the stomp dance and boxing matches, as well as a ball field. Garnering a crowd of "thousands," the "...first program ever staged in what will be, when completed, our six hundred and forty acre park" was deemed a great success with "All honor to Dwight Wolfinger, efficient secretary-manager of the chamber of commerce."²⁸

Although the Henryetta CCC camp was completed by the first week in July, it remained unoccupied for several months. At the first of September 1938, the city council approved a change in the city budget to "assure" the park by meeting an unspecified CCC quota. Taking \$900 from the extra labor fund of the fire department, a total of

²⁶Ibid., 24 April 1938 and 6 May 1938.

²⁷Ibid., 13 May 1938.

²⁸Ibid., 15 June 1938, 3 July 1938 and 5 July 1938.

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\$1,124.35 was put at the disposal of the park board "...for use in construction of the CCC park." Finally, at the end of the month, Lieutenant August Matthieson²⁹ announced 125 youths from the abandoned Spavinaw CCC camp in Mayes County would move to the Henryetta camp within a week. The boys' initial work was to be beautifying the camp grounds but once that was completed, construction work on the park would begin with the number of enrollees increasing to 200 at that time. Lieutenant Matthieson would continue as commander of Camp 2806; Edward Phillips of Muskogee and "...connected with the National Park Service..." was to be construction superintendent of the park; Bill Collins of Dewar was appointed technical foreman; and, the name of the landscape architect from Holdenville was not specified.³⁰

In early November 1938, Lieutenant Matthieson and Phillips addressed the Chamber of Commerce's regular luncheon. Matthieson noted that the enrollees were under the supervision of the army staff when at the camp but that Phillips' was in charge when they were at work in the park. Additionally, Matthieson noted that the federal government expended an average of \$87 per month per enrollee. Phillips, in turn, noted that the swimming pool to be built at the park would be "...the biggest feature of the entire park, and will be one of the best such pools in this section." He also explained that four projects had been submitted for approval to Washington but only one, for a road along the south side of the lake, had been approved. While all dead wood would be cleared, Phillips stated the underbrush and larger trees would be "...left intact to leave the park as near natural as possible."³¹

Work on the park began without fanfare. On January 20, 1939, Hudson McMullen, a graduate of Henryetta High School, was named senior foreman for the park project by the NPS. In addition to having "...several years experience in construction work," McMullen was previously in charge of the stonework for the National Guard Armory in Okemah (NR 1998). Assuming his duties the same day, McMullen was charged with direct supervision of construction work at the park. Between McMullen's appointment and the April 20th announcement of a May Day Fiesta at the park, the recreation center was officially named the "Jack Nichols Recreation Park" which was quickly shortened to Nichols Park.³²

With work ongoing in the park, the 4th of July festivities for 1939 were confined to the east side of the park. Charles

²⁹The Daily Oklahoman says Messinger, The Daily Free-Lance says Matthieson.

³⁰The Daily Oklahoman, 3 July 1938 and 30 September 1938. See also The Daily Free-Lance, 2 September 1938 and 5 October 1938.

³¹The Daily Free-Lance, 7 November 1938.

³²Ibid., 20 January 1939 and 20 April 1939.

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E. Krueger, now described as a NPS engineer, put the CCC boys to work protecting the beach area on the north side of the lake as “This area is under heavy construction and too many people going in would be injurious.” CCC enrollees were also to assist with directing traffic. To avoid jams, incoming traffic was to enter the park from the north road and go to the “...third drive-in.” The second drive-in was to be used to exit the grounds. Congressman Nichols, the principal speaker, again spoke during the festivities at the park to a crowd which reportedly numbered around 15,000. Although Nichols’ speech focused on the broader issues of “...Americanism and Patriotism...,” the event also included a dedicatory address for the park.³³

Just two days after the big event, it was announced that fishing would once again be allowed at the lake. The previous month, the city council voted to close the lake while construction of the beach was underway. However, with reports of falling fishing tackle business, in some cases as much as fifty percent, the city council rescinded their order. The Mayor noted that the lake would be carefully supervised and that fishing was limited to the deep water area on the north end of the lake.³⁴

By mid-July 1939, much work had been accomplished at the park. This included fencing in of the area; constructing pathways; removing underbrush and rocks; building of picnic tables and Dutch ovens; construction of disposal and garbage pails; and, laying of a water line to the park. At the time, construction of the beach remained paramount. By the first week of August 1939, the boys were busy “flooring” the beach area with rocks. Retaining walls to hold the sand were also planned but had yet to be erected.³⁵

Two park-related issues arose in August which were given to the park board for consideration. Although the park “...under agreement with the park service, (was) to be constructed according to a master plan devised by engineers of the service,” a petition was made by the Chamber of Commerce for a Works Projects Administration (WPA) project to construct a grandstand, playground sites, softball and baseball fields and tennis courts, among “...other recreational pursuits in which the general public could participate.” The other petition was made by Chief Alex Noon, head of the Creek Indian Nation. Noon urged the city to turn over a portion of the park to be used as a permanent Indian camp. While the first petition failed to come to fruition, on August 23, 1939, the park board set aside fifty acres at the park for the Indian camp. The camp was apparently located on the south side of the park, not too distant from the Boy Scout Cabin. At the annual meeting of the Creek Indians at Okemah in December, the Creek Nation formally accepted the land which was to “...be used for the holding and promotion of tribal ceremonies, celebrations, reunions,

³³Ibid., 2 July 1939, 3 July 1939 and 5 July 1939.

³⁴Ibid., 6 July 1939 and 9 July 1939.

³⁵Ibid., 16 July 1939 and 7 August 1939.

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tribal meetings, and gatherings.”³⁶

In October 1939, the windows in one of the newly completed latrines at the park were knocked out by vandals. This was the third act of vandalism at the park. Previously in 1939, one of the CCC-built picnic tables had been forced loose of its concrete posts and overturned. The year before, all the windows in the Scout cabin at the park were broken out and ceiling material removed from the building. Because the park was under federal jurisdiction at the time, would-be vandals were warned that destroying property at the park violated a federal law and the government would prosecute.³⁷

By February 1940, the CCC had constructed forty-eight Dutch ovens and tables on the north side of the lake and eighteen on the south side. The “...beautiful shelter house of native stone and heavy timbers...” on the north side of the lake was also in use with the “...two large fireplaces in each end of the building providing plenty of accommodation for any marshmallow or weiner roasting party that may take place.” The retaining walls for the beach were also done, with hundreds of tons of sand being put in place. The CCC boys had nearly completed work on the rock walls of a large septic tank. Work on the beach house and several boat docks were underway, as well as the building of the comfort station on the north side. The roads in the park were judged to be in good condition with peeled logs laid along side to prevent automobiles from turning into the woods. At the end of the month, the amount of labor spent by the government was tallied for the chamber. In all, 45,000 man-days, costing almost \$100,000, had been expended for the park project. Notably, 24,913 persons had visited the park during the summer months of the previous year.³⁸

Rumors of the closing of the Henryetta camp and, thus, ending CCC work on the park made headlines at the first of March 1940. Long-time park advocate, L.F. George, “pooh poohed” the rumors, noting that despite the lack of budgetary resources, Congress would more than likely “...raise the budget amount to the figure necessary for the operation of the camps and keep them going...” because the politicians feared the repercussions they would face if the camps were closed. Although “He declined to definitely state whether or not contact had been made with Rep. Jack Nichols...,” George assured locals “...that there was nothing alarming in the situation.” By mid-March, however, Henryettans were asked to send letters and telegrams to Congressional members requesting “...sufficient appropriations for carrying out the CCC program in full.” In addition to the Henryetta camp, six other park camps and two soil conservation camps were slated to be closed. Nichols, as well as Representatives Lyle Boren and

³⁶Ibid., 8 August 1939, 23 August 1939 and 2 January 1939.

³⁷Ibid., 9 October 1939.

³⁸Ibid., 16 February 1940 and 25 February 1940.

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Wesley Disney and Senators Josh Lee and Elmer Thomas, all opposed the closing of camps, particularly those within their districts.³⁹

At the end of March 1940, the House voted to add \$50 million dollars to the CCC budget; however, locals continued to be concerned about the closing of the camp. In a meeting with city and civic leaders, park officials declared that even if the project were to end on June 30, the work at the park "...would have been progressed to the point where a number of the units at the park could be used and that only a small amount of work would remain to be done in completing several others." However, both construction superintendent Phillips and engineer Sullivan pointed out "...that the park would not be completed to the point of efficiency and beauty that had been originally planned."⁴⁰

Facing the real possibility of the closing of the project, NPS officials began pressing work at the project in order to have the park "...in readiness" in case the city had to take over the work. Phillips concentrated labor efforts on completion of the "...bathing beach and its various accoutrements (sic)." By mid-April, Sullivan stated that the sand beach was complete, boat docks were ready for use on both sides of the lake and the diving tower at the beach was under construction. Additionally, timber work at the beach house had begun with "...nothing ahead to prevent Henryetta and district having an "ocean beach" of their own for swimming purposes during the coming summer."⁴¹

As preparations for the third 4th of July festival at Nichols park were underway in mid-June 1940, the newspaper announced that the Henryetta camp would not be closed. In a telegram from Representative Nichols, locals were informed that the project had been "...placed on (the) approved list and work will continue on the Nichols park project at least until October 15." At the time, no projects nationwide were approved to continue after that date.⁴²

With a three-day celebration planned, one of the highlights of the 1940 July 4th event was to be the raising of the "Largest U.S. Flag" at the park. The Lyman C. Hill Flag, presented to the city of Henryetta during World War I and flown from a flag pole located on Main Street, was to "...be raised into the air as a challenge to unAmerican interests and a tribute to the nobility of this nation during the Fourth of July program to be given...at Nichols park." Measuring thirty-six feet wide and forty-eight feet long, the flag hung from a 110 foot, steel, flag pole erected directly above the beach house still partially under construction. The location of the flag pole was decided by NPS

³⁹Ibid., 3 March 1940, 17 March 1940, 18 March 1940, 26 March 1940 and 27 March 1940.

⁴⁰Ibid., 28 March 1940 and 1 April 1940.

⁴¹Ibid., 12 April 1940.

⁴²Ibid., 19 June 1940.

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representatives, the city of Henryetta, the local park board, Chamber of Commerce and Veterans of Foreign Wars. Also ready for use during the festivities at the park was the east wing of the beach house and "...all of the exterior work adjacent to the beach," including the terraces. Notably, the lake was not open for swimming at the time due to the low water levels and lack of lifeguards.⁴³

With CCC work continuing at the site, officials at the park submitted applications for two new CCC projects by the end of June 1940. The first was to extend the road completely around the park area. The second project sent to Washington was for construction of a caretaker's house. In mid-July 1940, Dick Abrams, Chairman of the Park Board, asked the city council for a minimum of \$2,790 to pay for "...completion of the construction program at Nichols Park." The majority of the money, \$1,750, was to be used in completing the native stone caretaker's house. The remaining money was to be used for "...building shelter affairs through the park and for construction of entrance gates to the area."⁴⁴

Another construction project initiated in mid-1940 was conversion of the Boy Scout Cabin into a picnic shelter. Changes to the building included construction of a truss roof and removal of all but eight feet of the walls on both ends of each of the long sides of the building. Heavy wood columns would support the building in the newly created open space. Additionally, new stone chimneys would be erected on the short ends of the structure. The same time the second picnic shelter project for the park was announced, locals were also warned that unless picnickers began properly depositing their trash, the NPS would close the park until their portion of the park was complete. Days after this, the highway department began work on black-topping the road from Main Street to the park. Due to increased travel, residents along the road had been complaining about the dust.⁴⁵

At the end of September 1940, it was announced that the Henryetta CCC camp had "...been given an indefinite extended period for work." It was anticipated that the camp would continue for at least six months but Nichols, in his telegram transmitting the good news, noted that the "...concentration on defense program may require liquidation at any time." With Nichols urging "...all haste be shown in completing..." the project, NPS officials maintained it was "...highly probable that all construction work planned for the park will be completed within the six-months period...". Credit for the extension was again given to Nichols.⁴⁶

⁴³Ibid., 18 June 1940, 24 June 1940 and 26 June 1940.

⁴⁴Ibid., 24 June 1940 and 16 July 1940.

⁴⁵Ibid., 18 August 1940, 26 August 1940 and 11 September 1940.

⁴⁶Ibid., 24 September 1940.

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Construction of the roof of the five-room, native stone caretakers house occupied a large amount of the CCC workforce available at the park in October 1940. Other progress at the park was temporarily slowed by a major drop in the number of workers. About sixty-five men were dropped from the camp roster at mid-month due to the end of their enlistment period. In combination with additional men enlisting in the army, the total enrollment at the camp fell to about one hundred, almost half of what the camp usually numbered. Just days later, the Henryetta camp began serving as a central point for new enrollees. While the number of workers remained lowered for a time, nearly 160 men were mustered into the camp for examinations and other pre-transfer duties before heading for out-of-state camps.⁴⁷

With their six-month deadline looming, locals were heartened by the two hundred tons of coal delivered to the Henryetta camp in mid-March 1941. The large amount of coal was seen as a sign that work at the park would not end as planned on April 1, 1941. If efforts failed at securing another extension of the park project, it was hoped that the camp would remain as a headquarters for the soil conservation workers starting a recently organized conservation project in the Okmulgee County District. Towards the end of the month, Nichols sent a letter explaining that the continuation of the park work was unlikely. In addition to a major reduction in the NPS' appropriation, the increasing emphasis on defense-related projects was partially blamed for Nichols' inability to secure an extension. The increasing difficulty in meeting the CCC enrollment quota, as the country geared up for war and unemployment no longer plagued the nation, was also cited as a contributing factor to the placement of the Henryetta camp on the list of camps to be taken out of operation.⁴⁸

On March 23, 1941, the local newspaper carried a photograph of part of a sign that George Knapp, head of the Knapp Advertising Company and from Okmulgee, donated for erection at the park entrances. The signs were not only for Nichols Park but also the Creek National Assembly grounds in the park. The signs were constructed by Joe Rice. The signs were installed by the end of the month. At the time, Dwight Wolfinger, in his newspaper column, announced he would give a 48-pound bag of Play Boy flour to the "...first white person that lives in the city...that will read the Creek words correctly and interpret into the English language the large letters that appear at the top of the sign."⁴⁹

The Henryetta camp was given one last extension at the end of March 1941 but only for thirty days. It was anticipated that this would be sufficient time to complete all remaining minor jobs, so long as the weather remained

⁴⁷Ibid., 13 October 1940, 18 October 1940 and 19 January 1941.

⁴⁸Ibid., 12 March 1941.

⁴⁹Ibid., 23 March 1941 and 30 March 1941.

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favorable. The same day that the end of the camp was announced, the public was welcomed to inspect the nearly-complete park. Among the sites to see were the beach house; the caretaker's house; the picnic shelters; "...the many curious Moses rocks..." or water faucets; the numerous Dutch ovens and picnic tables; the latrines; the beach; the Range Riders' bridle path; the George Knapp new Creek Nation sign at the entrances; the boating on the lake; the three boat docks and floating boat wharf; the race track site; the 50 acre Creek Nation Camp grounds; the drives; the walks; the parking places; and, the woods. In all, 1,600 visitors made the trek to the park during the three hours the facility was opened.⁵⁰

Following the public inspection, it was anticipated the CCC boys would be occupied putting the finishing touches on the caretaker's house and completing detail work at the beach house for about a week. After this, the men would spend the remainder of the thirty days "...planting grass, shrubbery and otherwise making a general clean-up of the park." As the final deadline approached, the city hired Don Stormont as park caretaker. Stormont, a veteran peace officer and long-term Henryetta resident, was tasked with the duties of "...policing the grounds to prevent malicious destruction of property, watching over the lake in regard to fishing and boating, and in taking care of the park area in general." The park board also leased the bathhouse and bathing beach concessions to Raymond Bush, the local bowling alley operator. As part of the lease agreement, Bush was required to provide liability insurance to protect the city and park board "...from any damages that may arise from his operation of the lease." As planned, on May 1, 1941 and after "...completing their portion of the work on the Nichols park recreation job..." the remaining men of CCC Camp 2806 boarded a special train and departed Henryetta, bound for Gallup, New Mexico to work on a grazing project.⁵¹

During their thirty-one months at Henryetta, the CCC, working under the auspices of the NPS, developed what had been the old city reservoir into an outstanding recreation and entertainment site for area residents, as well as tourists. In addition to beautifying the grounds, the CCC constructed a sizeable beach, beach house, two picnic shelters, a caretaker's residence, restrooms and various picnic and camping facilities. The majority of resources were put to immediate use, even as construction continued on other buildings and sections of the park. Although the published cost of the project never rose past the original \$250,000, the project was created and extended twice during times when the CCC program itself was undergoing reductions. Jack Nichols, Congressman from the Second Oklahoma District, was largely responsible for these feats, following his successful deliverance of the CCC program in the mid-1930s.

Nichols Park is historically significant as an excellent example of the CCC's efforts in park development at the

⁵⁰Ibid., 23 March 1941, 30 March 1941 and 31 March 1941.

⁵¹Ibid., 3 April 1941, 21 April 1941, 27 April 1941 and 1 May 1941.

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municipal level. Without the workforce provided by Roosevelt's tree army, the park would have likely remained an unrealized dream of a few Henryettans. The major construction projects completed by the CCC between 1938 and 1941, including the beach, beach house, caretaker's residence, picnic shelters, comfort station and latrines, constitute the significant features of the park to the present time. The smaller CCC-built amenities, including picnic tables, water faucets and fire rings, also contribute to the overall rustic feeling and association that continues to dominate the park. Overall, the CCC's work was critical to the development and permanence of this entertainment and recreational facility in Henryetta.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN/ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

In addition to its entertainment and recreation significance as a municipal park developed by the CCC, Nichols Park is also significant as a designed landscape which includes several emblematic NPS Rustic style buildings and structures. Charles Krueger, who previously designed the CCC work projects at Wintersmith Park (NR 2000) in Ada, was apparently the chief NPS designer at Nichols Park, beginning the design work the summer previous to the advent of the work crew in October 1938 and remaining at the park for at least a year. Krueger employed the typical NPS design guidelines in the Nichols Park landscape design. While seeking to use the entire park area to the fullest extent possible, care was taken to ensure that the natural features and character of the area were not damaged. As such, the necessary construction projects to facilitate enjoyment of the site by the public were designed to harmonize as much as possible with their natural surroundings.⁵² The terrain surrounding the lake lent itself well to the design philosophy of the NPS Rustic style and the materials chosen for the facilities.

Significantly, although composed of interrelated elements, Nichols Park functions overall as a single entity. While the park contains several units which serve specific functions, such as fishing or picnicking, the overall design of the area ensures each unit works together to express the intent of the park as a organic recreational center. Additionally, the individual buildings and structures in the park are reliant on their naturalistic surroundings to convey their significance. Reinforcing the broader landscape design, as well, are all the minor individual elements of the park, such as the culverts, picnic tables and drainage channels.

All of the buildings and structures, including the beach house, two picnic shelters, comfort station, restrooms and caretaker's residence, at Nichols Park constructed by the CCC are in the NPS Rustic style. This style of architecture, according to Albert Good, editor of the NPS' 1935 Park Structures and Facilities and the 1938 three-volume Park and Recreation Structures, achieved "...sympathy with natural surroundings and with the past" via "...the use of native

⁵²Linda Flint McClelland, Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916 to 1942 (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1993), 231.

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materials in proper scale, and through the avoidance of rigid, straight lines, and over-sophistication.” Contributing to the “rustic” feel of the style was the illusion that the construction projects were “...executed by pioneer craftsman with limited hand tools.”⁵³ Natural rock outcroppings along the south and east shorelines of the lake helped the stone fire pits, stone picnic tables, and stone and wood buildings and structures blend into the setting. The picnic areas are sited to take maximum advantage of views of the lake from the overlooking bluffs.

The NPS Rustic style emphasized the use of native building materials; in Oklahoma, both stone and wood were popular with stone dominating the choice of materials at Nichols Park. In order to make the buildings and structures less conspicuous, the horizontal nature of the resource was emphasized by keeping the building silhouette low to the ground, including low-pitched roofs, and having horizontal, rather than vertical, lines dominate. In keeping with their surroundings, the buildings were also to be appropriately scaled so that in heavily wooded, rough terrain the resources would exhibit a matching fortitude to their environment. Color schemes of the buildings were generally “...to incorporate colors that occurred in nature and were dominant in the immediate surroundings.” Warm browns were found to be the most suitable color as greens reflected a solid continuous color which conflicted with the uneven surface of the surrounding foliage.⁵⁴

All of these characteristics of the NPS Rustic style are found in the individual and collective buildings and structures at Nichols Park. The beach house, the largest and most prominent building at the park, is particularly representative of the NPS Rustic style, with its low-pitched roof, high stone walls and long, narrow, rectangular, wood windows. The beach house stairs are also highly reflective of the NPS design philosophy as on the back, the stairs blend with the naturalistic setting, and on the front, the stairs and terraces emphasize the horizontal feel of the building. The comfort station and latrines are also excellent examples of the architectural style as applied to buildings of functional necessity. The tall, stone wing walls sheltering the entrances are a particularly appropriate yet aesthetic design element. While the north picnic shelter more clearly expresses the rustic emphasis of the style with its massive, gable end, stone chimneys and artistic, stone terrace, the south picnic shelter reflects the economic awareness of the CCC and NPS programs. The reuse of the existing stone building saved a significant amount of labor and material while providing a useable structure. The building underwent a few modifications, including the addition of the large, stone chimneys and opening of the walls, which lend a rustic feel to the building, making it compatible with the other buildings and structures in the park. The caretaker’s residence, one of the last buildings erected in the park, has lost its ability to convey its historic significance due to modifications, particularly the infill of the breezeway and replacement of the original windows and material on the gable ends. While the resources at Nichols Park are relatively fewer in number as compared to those constructed at Oklahoma’s one national and ten state parks during

⁵³Ibid., 258-259.

⁵⁴Ibid., 259-261.

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the period, they, nonetheless, are architecturally significant as examples of the NPS' park design philosophy as implemented by the CCC in Henryetta's municipal park.

In addition to the more obvious construction projects, such as the beach house and picnic shelters, the CCC also undertook a variety of landscaping and infrastructure projects which fairly seamlessly blend the park into the natural landscape. Among other creative expressions of the mingling of nature and convenience are the many "Moses Rocks" found in the park. Consisting of a water line extended through a boulder, these faucets were not unique to Nichols Park but were representative of the NPS' desire to retain the "natural" feel of the outdoors while providing the public with the means to meet their elemental needs.

Overall, Nichols Park is an excellent example of the CCC's park development efforts at the municipal level between 1938 and 1941 in Henryetta, Oklahoma. The park in its entirety ably reflects the design philosophy of the CCC and NPS during the period. Related to this, the individual buildings and structures within the park are good examples of the NPS Rustic style. Historically, the park represents the critical role of the CCC, and therefore the federal government, in developing recreation and entertainment facilities for towns such as Henryetta.

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	Zone	Easting	Northing
E.	15	229950	3922180
F.	15	229980	3922210
G.	15	230210	3921950
H.	15	230050	3921720
I.	15	230130	3921630
J.	15	230010	3921440
K.	15	229650	3921600
L.	15	229430	3921920
M.	15	229290	3922140

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

From the north entry gate, begin roughly fifty feet north of the main north park road, continue southeast along this line to a point about 100 feet east of the caretaker's residence, then go south to the main north park road, then continue along the road past all of the ball fields to a point about 120 feet west of the Indian Nation Turnpike, then go north of the main north park road about 20 feet and continue following the road around to the historic turnaround parking lot on the south side of the park, then go about fifty feet south from the main south park road and continue along this line to a point about fifty feet south of the south entry gate, then go north along Lake Road to the point of beginning. Part of the NW 1/4 and of the SW and SE 1/4s of the SW 1/4 of Section and part of the NW and NE 1/4s of Section 30, Township 11 North, Range 13 East.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries include the park property which retains its historic integrity with the development efforts of the CCC from 1938 to 1941. The baseball and softball fields and rodeo arena located on the north central side of the park have been excluded due to the modern materials which dominate this portion of the park.