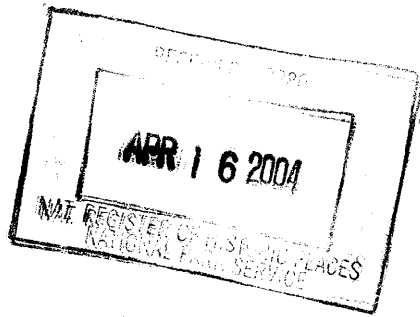


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Elkhi Stadium

other names/site number Handke Stadium

2. Location

street & number Main Street and Norfolk Avenue not for publication N/A

city or town Elk River vicinity N/A

state Minnesota code MN county Sherburne code 141 zip code 55330

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Nina M. Archabal 4/6/04

Signature of certifying official Nina M. Archabal, Director and State Historic Preservation Officer, Minnesota Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that 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): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Edmund B. Ball

Date of Action

5/26/04

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

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
		sites
1		structure
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture/Sports Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture/Sports Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

No Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Granite

Concrete

roof Concrete

other

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.)

Property is:

- 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

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1922-1953

Significant Dates

1922

1926

1940

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Chase, Eugene E. (architect)

National Youth Administration (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property circa 1.5 acres

Elk River, Minn., 1961
Revised 1993

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1.	<u>1</u> <u>5</u> Zone	<u>4</u> <u>5</u> <u>4</u> <u>8</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u> Easting	<u>5</u> <u>0</u> <u>1</u> <u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u> Northing
2.	<u> </u> <u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> Northing
3.	<u> </u> <u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> Northing
4.	<u> </u> <u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> Northing

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	<u>David C. Anderson</u>	date	<u>8/15/03</u>
organization	<u> </u>	telephone	<u>563/382-3079</u>
street and number	<u>169 Lundy Bridge Drive</u>	zip code	<u>52172</u>
city or town	<u>waukon</u>	state	<u>IA</u>

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	<u>Elk River Independent School District No. 728</u>		
street & number	<u>327 King Avenue</u>	telephone	<u>763/441-3400</u>
city or town	<u>Elk River</u>	state	<u>MN</u>
		zip code	<u>55330</u>

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Elkhi Stadium
Sherburne County, MN

DESCRIPTION

The Elkhi Stadium is located in Elk River, Minnesota, a city of about 11,000 inhabitants located 25 miles northwest of Minneapolis in Sherburne County. The stadium is adjacent to the former Handke Elementary School on a site in the heart of the city's residential area. It is a regulation-size athletic field with auxiliary structures that include bleachers and other seating, retaining walls, a warming house, and backstops for baseball and softball. The stadium in its present form dates to 1940.

The playing field is at the bottom of a natural depression left after the last glacier retreated from central Minnesota between 12,000 and 14,000 years ago. Until 1922 this was a pond with variable water levels that was mostly used for winter skating and sliding. The site includes wooded slopes on three sides and the Handke School on the west end. The elevation differential from the playing field to the ground level at Main Street and the school is approximately 30 feet.*

The material used in all built elements in the stadium is granite fieldstone (cobblestones) set in concrete. The field is surrounded by a retaining wall of this material that varies in height from one to five feet. At the west end there are additional retaining walls in the slope and two sets of tiered stone seating (bleachers) built directly into the ground, one each to the north and south of a staircase running the distance between field and school.

The largest of these bleacher sections has been filled in to create a continuous slope, and the fill extends to the north side of the stair leading down to the field. An historic photo from ca. 1940 shows how this looked when built. The second, smaller set of tiered seating is located behind a wire screen backstop. Four of the tiers are visible but more may be present under the current slope. A three-tiered section of seats, which also serves as a retaining wall, is located on both sides of a warming house on the north side of the field. These rise two feet at the first level and 1½ feet each in the second and third levels.

The warming house measures 22½ by 16 by 11 feet. The walls are of cobblestones, and they remain exposed in the interior. Short parapets with concrete copings rise above a flat concrete roof. There is a short cobblestone chimney at the back of the building. A 16-foot-long hearth is built into the north wall with a three-foot-square firebox at present occupied by a gas heater insert. Wooden benches run along the east, west, and south walls. The heavy wood door and 8/8 double-hung sash are replacements of their original counterparts but make no substantial adverse impact on the structure's historic integrity when compared with historic photos of the building.

The principal access to the stadium is off Main Street at the west end near the school. This leads down to the field via a series of cobblestone/concrete platforms and stairs to the playing field. There is also the already mentioned stairway at the west end leading to a rear entrance of the school. A third set of stairs and walkway is located on the north side west of the warming house, and a fourth comes in from the southeast corner near the intersection of Main Street and Norfolk Avenue. In addition, vehicular access is provided by a paved road at the east end of the field near the south side.

*A topographic map drawn by local civil engineers that includes structural details of many features of the stadium is included in the documentation submitted with this nomination.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Elkhi Stadium
Sherburne County, MN

From the street level the stadium resembles a park, and many of the trees (predominately bur oak) are large enough to have been present on the site as early as the 1920s, and some are shown on photos from the 1939 period of construction. Additional plantings were introduced at that time as part of the landscape plan (Heinzman).

A stone well pit is set into the south slope at the playing field level, and a similar structure is located nearby about halfway up the slope. Other well pits were located at the west end below the large bleacher section, but they are no longer in evidence. These wells provided the water to flood the field for skating, but now the water is trucked in.

Most of the changes to the stadium since its completion in 1940 were undertaken since 1985. At this point it is not clear whether the stone seats and retaining walls that are no longer in evidence at the west end were destroyed or merely covered over with soil. A section of the five-foot retaining wall on the east end near the north side has collapsed and is being repaired. The steepest slope, on the south side, has suffered from erosion over the years, but otherwise the stadium property is in good condition.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Elkhi Stadium is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Entertainment/Recreation and Politics/Government. The property is locally significant and is being nominated under the NRHP Multiple Property Documentation Form "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941."

The stadium is a product of local initiative aided by funding provided by the New Deal-era National Youth Administration (NYA), which converted a pond on school property into a community recreational resource for students and city residents of all ages. The history of Elkhi Stadium shows how a local school district through its administration, faculty and students was able to initiate and lead an effort to enhance a local resource, engage other local institutions and individuals, mobilize local material resources, and access Federal New Deal funding. In the process, community well-being was enhanced by providing income for unemployed youth during hard economic times and fostering community pride that is still in evidence.

The Stadium to 1939

The City of Elk River was platted in 1865, and its early growth took place in connection with lumbering. Later, dairy farming became important, and now the city is within the Twin City metro area.

In 1920 the Elk River school lot where the stadium and Handke School are located was the location of the District's first high school, which served the entire mostly rural district. It had been built in 1898 north of the Handke School and was demolished in 1952. The Handke building was constructed in 1930 as a high school, and it later became an elementary school.

Approximately 1½ acres of the school lot was steeply wooded ground surrounding a large pond, whose use had been mostly limited to ice skating and sliding. In 1921 a group of a dozen or so high school boys approached the 27-year-old recently elected District Superintendent for permission to turn the pond into a football field, since the district had no athletic field on its property at the time.* Most of the half-dozen faculty were supportive, and

*The account of the stadium's history is drawn from Clark (1983) and Heinzman (2001). The Heinzman history includes material provided in interviews with several of those involved with the project.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 3

Elkhi Stadium
Sherburne County, MN

Superintendent Clark wrote that he did not bother to seek School Board consent before giving the "go-ahead." He was not, however, able to lend any official material or monetary support to this project which, he later wrote, was "largely a reflection of the influence of athletics upon school and community spirit and effort" (Clark, 2). Neighboring communities, e.g. Anoka, Princeton and Monticello, had football teams while Elk River, apparently, did not.

The plan was to haul in enough soil and other material to raise the ground level and fill the pond, turning it into a playing field. A number of the students were from area farms and "volunteered the use of farm wagons, farm horses, farm scrapers and shovels. Even some farmers themselves. It all seemed to grow spontaneously" (Clark, 2).

The work was done mostly on weekends, by hand and with horse power, and townspeople got involved as well. This initial phase lasted about a year and involved 100 to 200 people. Superintendent Clark felt that enough had been accomplished to publicize the effort.

A good start was made in the fall of 1921. The work continued into 1922. By that time enough progress had been made to assure the commitment of the school government in support of what was in progress. (Superintendent) Clark even had a good sized sign painted and put up on the highway. 'ELKHI SCHOOL PLAYGROUND. MINNESOTA'S FINEST ATHLETIC HIGH SCHOOL FIELD' or words to that effect. (Clark, 3)

The name was chosen by the student body in a referendum. In May 1925 the project was dedicated and the occasion commemorated as "Sherburne County Accomplishment Day" (Clark, 4).

By then Superintendent Clark had left the area and the improvement of the "playground" was about to enter a second construction period under a new Superintendent. In 1929 it was decided to haul in 2,000 yards of additional fill and enlarge the field to include a "regulation football gridiron" and a running track around its periphery (Heinzman). Once again the local townspeople and area farmers got into the act, and the Elk River Commercial Club provided logistical support. Most of the work was done on August 25 and 26. Men with teams of horses were paid \$2.50 per day and cash donations were solicited from townspeople who chose not to donate their labor (*Sherburne County Star News*, 8-19-26 and 8-26-26).

The third period in the building of Elkhi Stadium was the most important in terms of landscape and architecture, and it was made possible by funding provided by the Federal government. Equally important for the outcome were the goals, requirements, and programmatic guidelines promulgated by the Federal agency involved, namely the National Youth Administration (NYA).

The NYA was created on June 26, 1935 as a division of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). In 1939 it was transferred to the Federal Security Agency and then terminated in September 1943. The NYA was intended to provide useful employment, experience, and skills for the 218 million American youth on relief in 1935, "relief" being a strictly local responsibility at the time and not available in any consistent pattern. The NYA focused on two groups of young people: youths enrolled in school (elementary to graduate levels) and unemployed out-of-school young people between 16 and 24 years of age (Graham, Jr., 364).

The in-school work program provided jobs in libraries, playgrounds and in other public institutions, e.g. national parks, while the out-of-school youth received on-the-job training in construction, metal- and woodworking, health

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Elkhi Stadium
Sherburne County, MN

care and in other occupations. On the national level a total of \$662,300,000 was spent to aid some 4,800,000 people (Federal Security Agency, 234).

In Minnesota \$10,312,393 was spent for out-of-school work and \$4,004,704 on jobs for students still in school. Nationwide only 21% of the NYA-supported work was in construction, and in Minnesota few buildings were built by the NYA. The most important NYA work here was in the category of roadside improvements, and these included historic markers, waysides, and scenic overlooks (Anderson, Section E, 70). An example in Sherburne County is the Babcock Memorial Park on Highway 10 near Elk River.

NYA projects that included construction reflected guidelines and requirements of the WPA. For example, projects were proposed and sponsored by a local public agency that would be responsible for a portion of the project cost; typically this was material and other non-labor costs. For the most part, labor was paid by the NYA, which was consistent with its major objectives:

1. To provide funds for the part-time employment of needy school, college, and graduate students so that they could continue their education.
2. To provide funds for the part-time employment of young people on work projects, the projects being designed primarily not only to give these young people valuable work experience but to benefit youth generally in the local communities.
3. To establish and to encourage the establishment of job training, counseling, and placement services for youth.
4. To encourage the development and extension of constructive educational and job-qualifying leisure-time activities.

(Anderson, Section E, 69)

A front page story, "School Stadium Improvement By NYA Will Start Next Week" in the *Sherburne County Star News* (April 20, 1939) summarized the work plan.*

The long planned improvement of the Elk River school stadium, the natural bowl just east of the school house, will be started next week as a National Youth Administration Project. The work will be going on for several months.

Gene Chase of Elk River will be the foreman in charge of the work. He is an engineer and has been connected with the planning of the project since its inception. He will have a crew of 40 boys and young men on the job, divided into four shifts, with ten constantly on the job.

Plans call for the reshaping of the sides of the stadium, building paths and stone steps leading to the floor of the bowl. At the west end, the piles of ashes will be removed and some other plan adopted to take care of them, and retaining walls will be built.

The plans call for an improved roadway leading down into the stadium. Some trees will be set out in accordance with the plans for landscaping to be followed out in a later project.

*Searches in the school district files and at the National Archives failed to locate any documentation on the project. Consequently this account relies on newspaper accounts and oral histories taken by Don Heinzman and Kurt Kragness. See Bibliography.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 5

Elkhi Stadium
Sherburne County, MN

Tennis courts will also be built to fill a long felt want by those interested in this sport. For the present, however, the floor of the stadium will not be sodded, this being left for a later project.

The cost of the project, as far as labor is concerned, will be taken care (of) by the NYA, the local school only being obliged to pay for the present project at \$1,200, including the foreman's pay.

This is a project which will provide a great improvement in this natural school playground.

Gene Chase also designed and oversaw the construction of a sewer line in Elk River under WPA auspices (*Sherburne County Star News*, July 7, 1940). A number of trees were planted, but whether the landscape plan was ever fully implemented is not clear. The young men hired were unemployed high school graduates, and they were taught to lay up walls with cobblestones and concrete. The granite fieldstone was an abundant local material left behind by glaciers and considered a nuisance by farmers (Heinzman).

The warming house was paid for by local civic groups and was an important enhancement of the stadium's function as a skating rink.

The house is larger than one would believe, and is equipped with a large fireplace and benches around the walls. This will fill a long felt need during the skating season at Elk River. (*Sherburne County Star News*, 9-12-40).

The amount of money provided by the NYA is unknown, but the project provided employment for a crew averaging about a dozen youths for several months (*Sherburne County Star News*, 9-5-40).

On September 5, 1940, the "improved" Elkhi Stadium was dedicated. Featured speakers were Supt. Handke and C. D. Lund, head of the NYA in Minnesota. The event included a concert by the Elk River Municipal Band.

The music sounded especially well in the stadium, and many of those who heard it believe it would be a good thing to have the summer concerts there. (*Sherburne County Star News*, 9-12-40)

The problem of drainage was apparently not completely solved, however, although the high school football team continued playing there until the early 1950s when a new football field was laid out on the old fairgrounds (Heinzman). The stadium continued in use for physical education classes, baseball and summer softball and, as ever, for skating and sliding. At some point the City assumed responsibility for flooding the stadium and keeping the ice clear of snow.

Deferred maintenance by the school district led to some deterioration, and in 2000 the local Rotary Club initiated a long-term effort to repair and restore the stadium. This has already resulted in repair of the warming house and ongoing work on the retaining walls and, most recently, seeding the south slope with prairie grasses to control erosion.

The school district still owns the stadium and the Handke School, although the latter now houses Community Education and an arts and culture center.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 6

Elkhi Stadium
Sherburne County, MN

Summary and Conclusion

The Elkhi Stadium satisfies pertinent registration requirements for social and recreational facilities as outlined in the NRHP MPDF "Federal Relief Construction in Minnesota, 1933-1941." As upgraded and improved with NYA funding, the Elkhi Stadium represents "a significant contribution to the community by providing a new and modern facility which offered programs, amenities, recreational activities, or community services which were previously unavailable...." (Anderson, Section F, 27-28)

The stadium also meets the historic integrity standards for such properties:

A social or recreational facility should possess integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, and association, and prominent features should remain intact, and any alterations should be modest in scale without impacting or obscuring major facades, elements, or design features. (ibid., 29)

From its origin as a pond on school property, the stadium was the only skating rink in Elk River, and after the first phase of construction the local school district's only athletic field on school property. The work done under NYA auspices included new construction that substantially improved the facility's ability to serve not only school needs but those of the community as a whole.

Nature provided an opportunity for enterprising youth and imaginative school authorities to work together with the larger community on a project that was to benefit everyone involved. The participants realized early on that they were working on something unique, and a multi-purpose sport and recreational facility was the result. Something less tangible but important also developed, and it was in evidence already at the completion of the first period of construction in 1922 – community pride and satisfaction. This has been revived in recent years by the Elk River Rotary Club's initiative to restore the stadium and revive local pride in what was regarded in 1940 as "one of the most unique natural playgrounds in the country" (*Sherburne County Star News*, August 1940, quoted in Heinzman).

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Elkhi Stadium
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- Graham, Jr., Otis L. "The National Youth Administration." (in) *Dictionary of American History*, Volume VII. New York, 1976.
- Heinzman, Don and Kurt Kragness. *History of the Elkhi Stadium.* Unpublished ms. January 8, 2001.
- Oliver, John and Associates. *Topographic Survey Map for School District No. 728.* Elk River, MN, 1990.
- Plat Book of Sherburne County, Minnesota.* Minneapolis, 1903.
- Sherburne County Historical Society. Becker, MN. Handke Subject File.
- Sherburne County Star News.* Elk River. Issues dated: 8-19-26, 4-2-39, 9-5-40, 9-12-40, 7-7-60.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 6, Block 5, Houltons Addition, Elk River, Minnesota and that part of Block 5, Houltons Addition, Elk River, Minnesota lying South of Lots 1 through 9, said Block 5, and East of Lot 18 in said Block 5.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

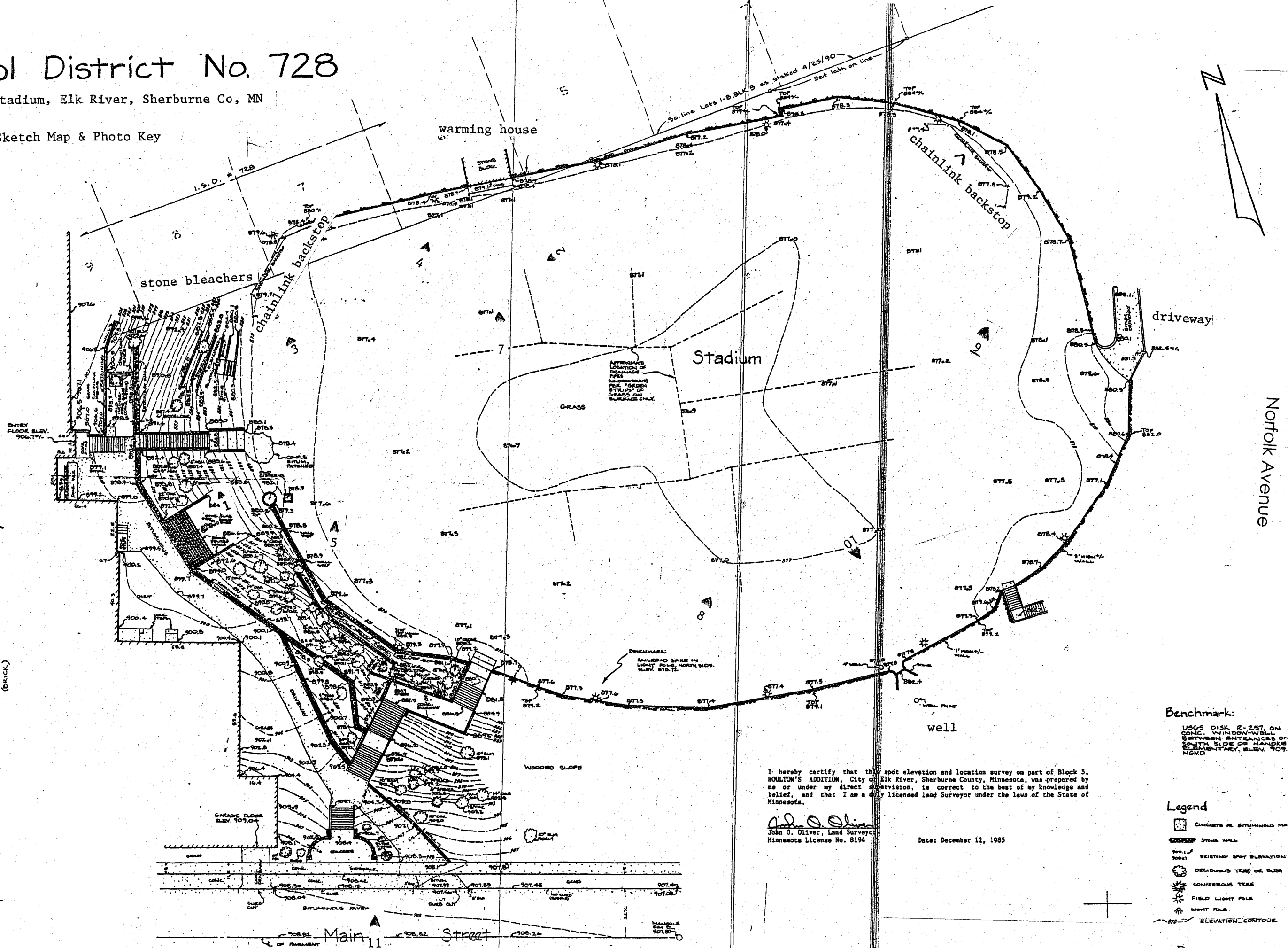
The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the stadium.

School District No. 728

Elkhi Stadium, Elk River, Sherburne Co, MN

Sketch Map & Photo Key

Handke Elementary School Building



I hereby certify that this spot elevation and location survey on part of Block 5, HOULTON'S ADDITION, City of Elk River, Sherburne County, Minnesota, was prepared by me or under my direct supervision, is correct to the best of my knowledge and belief, and that I am a duly licensed land Surveyor under the laws of the State of Minnesota.

J. O. Oliver
 Joan O. Oliver, Land Surveyor
 Minnesota License No. 8194

Date: December 12, 1985

Benchmark:
 USGS DISK R-257, ON CONC. WINDOW-WELL BETWEEN BENCHMARKS ON SOUTH SIDE OF HANDKE ELEMENTARY, ELEV. 909.140

- Legend**
- CONCRETE OR BITUMINOUS WALL
 - STONE WALL
 - EXISTING SPOT ELEVATION
 - DECIDUOUS TREE OR BUSH
 - CONIFEROUS TREE
 - FIELD LIGHT POLE
 - LIGHT POLE
 - ELEVATION CONTOUR