# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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FOR NPS USE ONLY RECEIVED JAN 1 5 1979

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Mississippi 39205

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STATE	Epidenia A de la desta d	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Mississippi		28	Lauderdale	75
CLASSIFICA	TION			
CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRES	ENTUSE
	X_PUBLIC		AGRICULTURE	MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)			COMMERCIAL	
X STRUCTURE	BOTH	WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	PRIVATE RESIDEN
	PUBLIC ACQUISITION		ENTERTAINMENT	
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Meridian		VICINITY OF	Mississipp	oi 39301
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REPRESENT	TATION IN EXIST	ING SURVEYS		
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	Statewide Survey of	Historic Sites		
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	August 26, 1977	FEDERAL	STATECOUNTYLOCA	L
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS	Mississippi Departm			
CITY, TOWN			STATE	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·



CON	DITION	CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
EXCELLENT X_GOOD FAIR	DETERIORATED RUINS UNEXPOSED	UNALTERED	XORIGINAL SITE

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

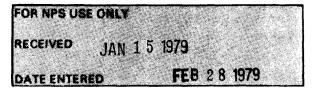
Located in west-central Meridian, Mississippi, and surrounded by medium-density residential development, Highland Park occupies a thirty-two-acre irregularly shaped tract bordering in part on Gallagher Creek. The main body of the park, which lies west of the creek, is relatively flat, while in the southeast portion of the property, extending across the creek, the grade rises sharply to the easternmost boundary. Only forty percent of the park is wooded, thus leaving ample open space for large-scale recreational activities. Many of the trees, especially in the northeast section, are part of the original plan of the park and are formally arranged along sidewalks and around focal points. Originally Highland Park was divided into two distinct areas, the northern part for pedestrians and the southern part for those with horses. Drives throughout the park were paved in the 1940s.

An important consideration in the design of the park was the city streetcar line. Through a cooperative effort between the City of Meridian and the Meridian Railway and Light Company, the streetcar line was extended to reach the park, in a remote part of town at the turn of the century. A streetcar platform was located in the northeast corner of the park and became the main entrance. South from this point, the original twelve-foot wide concrete promenade connected several of the key elements of the park: a small pool, then the carousel house, a large loveseat, a monument, and finally a gazebo. A sidewalk extended from the promenade eastward to the dance pavilion and another from the gazebo southwest to the bandstand. Directly south of this formally planned area was a picturesque group of features, including a large "lagoon," alligator pond, footbridge, and greenhouse. Two picnic shelters were set beneath trees in the western section of the park, and the only original features in the southeast were a small toilet facility and a terraced amphitheater on the hillside. Of these original features, all remain except the dance pavilion and green. The bandstand, toilets, alligator pond, bridge, and picnic shelters are faced with house. dark brown native sandstone in rubble masonry.

Over the years other features have been added to the grounds. In the 1920s a downtown monument was relocated in the park. In the 1930s two swimming pools were built on the site of the dance pavilion, and a small one-story commercial building was added near the northwest corner of the property facing 19th Street. Also in that decade an arboretum was begun in the vicinity of the amphitheater. A small fighter jet was located on the grounds between the promenade and the swimming pools in 1972. More recently, the park has seen the construction of the Parks and Recreation Department office, a one-story masonry building; the Jimmy Rogers Museum; a turn-of-the-century steam engine and caboose; and finally, the Frank Cochran Center, a large building used for various indoor events. Various pieces of children's play equipment have been located around the park, particularly in the area between the carousel house and the streetcar platform. Of the recent additions only the jet and the Cochran center seriously intrude upon the character of Highland Park, the former because of its location in the most formal section of the park and the latter because of its enormous scale, incongruous materials, siting, and bright yellow color.

The park can best be described by an itemized inventory with details of each feature included. The inventory is numbered to correspond with the accompanying map.

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**CONTINUATION SHEET** 

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE

7 - DESCRIPTION

Original building period, 1908-1914:

1. Concrete Bridge, 1914

Built by the local contracting firm of Dabbs and Wetmore for the American Light and Railway Company, the single-span concrete structure bridges Gallagher Creek and was originally intended for streetcar traffic.

### 2. Streetcar Platform, 1909

The approximately forty-foot long concrete platform has a wide flight of concrete steps on its south side that led to the promenade. Originally covered with a wooden roof, the platform now has a flat roof supported by slender steel columns and is used as a picnic shelter.

### 3. Promenade, 1908-1909

The twelve-foot-wide white concrete sidewalk originally led from the streetcar platform to the pool, gazebo, bandstand, and dance pavilion, with short perpendicular segments leading to the loveseat and the I. A. Marks monument. Today the promenade is intact with the exception of the portion from the platform to the pool, which has been removed.

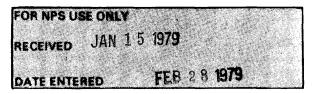
### 3a. Pedestals

Scattered in pairs around the promenade and throughout the park are high concrete pedestals, designed to hold urns. There are three pairs approximately four feet high and one smaller pair near the bandstand. None of the pedestals have retained their urns.

### 4. Carousel House, 1909

The carousel house was begun in 1909 in anticipation of the arrival of the newly acquired Dentzel carousel. It is a rectangular building approximately seventy feet by seventy-five feet with twenty-two-foot high board and batten exterior walls. The multi-ridge roof is pierced in the center with an octagonal clerestory about forty feet in diameter, lighting the interior with thirty-two six-light stationary sash hung horizontally. The peaked roof of the clerestory conforms to the octagon. At the center of the east, west, and south elevations, below small gable extensions at the eaves, are large entrances with double doors and four-light transoms. The north elevation has a large central window (now covered with plywood) with an identical gable. Originally the south elevation was open on both sides of its entrance, lighted either by glass or open lattice. The openings have been closed and a relatively new window unit appears to the west of the doorway. Similar window units symmetrically flank the center doors of the east and west elevations and the center window of the north elevation. A shed roof has been applied across the south elevation and is supported by slender steel columns. Inside, the original mosaic tile floor with a large snowflake pattern in green, yellow, terra cotta, and white is intact. A high paneled wainscot of painted oak encircles the large interior space. On the south wall, a new concession stand has been built, replacing the original soda fountain. In view of the original open design of the south wall, it is probable that the soda fountain was intended

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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7 - DESCRIPTION

to serve patrons both inside and outside. The clerestory is carried on eight wooden columns encased in pressed tin simulating square fluted columns raised on pedestals. For safety, a section of low wooden fencing links the columns, controlling access to the carousel.

### 5. Dentzel Carousel, 1909

Purchased in 1909 by the City of Meridian, the Dentzel carousel is a stationary carousel approximately thirty feet in diameter with two animals abreast. The twenty-eight handcarved animals secured by brass poles include one lion, one tiger, two deer, two antelope, two giraffes, and twenty horses, all decorated with carvings of parrots, eagles, clown faces, flags, and young girls, with the outer ring displaying more elaborate carving. Two doubleseated chariots ornamented by scrolls and flowers increase the seating capacity of the carousel to thirty-six. All stations are of brightly painted carved wood trimmed with gold. The carousel is further ornamented with three tiers of "scenery" containing sixty-four original oil paintings. Above the outer ring of animals, at the end of the sixteen-spoke rafters, are thirty-two oil paintings on wood. Sixteen are large views of animals ranging from chickens to buffalo, framed in a long cartouche of painted scrolls. Between these and over each animal is a smaller landscape painting set in a frame of gilded wood scrolls. Much of the mechanical equipment and structural members are concealed by two inner tiers of The upper tier features fifteen genre and landscape scenes of Europe and the paintings. Middle East painted in oil on canvas. On the sixteenth panel is the advertisement: "G. A. DENTZEL BUILDER of the LATEST IMPROVED CARROUSEL [sic] 3635-41 Germantown, Pa." Both paintings and advertisement are framed in wood with painted scrolls. One scene in the upper tier has been repainted, with minimal success. Below are sixteen canvases which unfortunately have been painted over in red, white, and blue, with eagle decals applied over the alternating white canvases. These too were originally small landscapes. A deck of wide planks forms the riding platform, which is raised twelve inches off the floor and encircled by a four-inch metal rim. The original carousel pipe organ fell into disrepair years ago and was supplanted by recorded music. Otherwise, the carousel is in excellent mechanical condition.

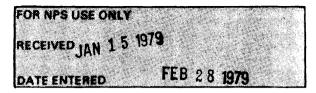
#### 6. Small Pool, 1909

The shallow concrete pool, approximately fifteen feet in diameter, is surrounded by a simple iron fence. The center pedestal once held a tiered fountain, which has been replaced by a smaller concrete ornament.

### 7. Streetlights, 1909

Paired on either side of the promenade from the pool to the gazebo are eight cast-iron streetlights with large glass globes and fluted shafts resting on small pedestals. Another pair marks the approach to the bandstand, beyond the gazebo. In 1909, lighted arches spanned the promenade between the streetlights but were removed at an undetermined date.

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### 7 - DESCRIPTION

### 8. Loveseat, 1912

To the west of the promenade between the second and third pairs of streetlights is a wide section of sidewalk leading to the loveseat, a large cast-concrete semicircular bench approximately ten feet in diameter. The loveseat is divided into two equal parts by a high pedestal at its midpoint.

#### 9. Gazebo, 1909

Built on a stone foundation, the gazebo is a metal structure comprised principally of six cast-iron Ionic columns. Above each column is a block which, with two consoles, supports the tin entablature. Resting on the entablature above the columns are electric light fixtures which no longer work and from which the globes are missing. The tin roof is flat at the perimeter but in the center forms a shallow ribbed dome pierced by polygonal openings which are not original. Crowning the dome is an elaborate wrought-iron finial. The tile floor of the gazebo is identical to that inside the carousel house. A modern water fountain is in the center of the gazebo, replacing an earlier one.

### 10. Statue, 1913 In April, 1913, when Highland Park was almost completed, the likeness of I. A. Marks, founder of the park, was dedicated. The lifesize cast-bronze statue is raised on a high concrete pedestal and is located in a circular flower bed west of the promenade. Unfortunately, the statue is unsigned and the artist unknown.

#### 11. Bandstand, 1909

The bandstand is a masonry and wood octagon about thirty feet in diameter. A rubble wall of native sandstone eight feet tall carries eight wooden columns which in turn carry the peaked roof. Paired wooden brackets at each column provide the simplest ornament, and a flight of wide concrete steps allows access to the brick floor of the bandstand.

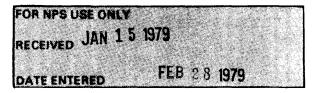
### 12. Urn, 1913

The large cast-concrete urn is placed in a circular flower bed on a line between the promenade and the dance pavilion site. Cast with garlands and cherubs, the urn stands on a square plinth, the whole approximately four feet in height.

#### 13. Toilet Rooms, 1909

Originally housing the ladies' restroom, the long narrow building also included the major entrance to the dance pavilion area. It is comprised of two blocks separated by a wide breezeway which is on axis with the urn and approaching sidewalk. The walls are native sandstone in rubble masonry, and the whole is topped by a long hip roof of terra cotta tile. Today the building is occupied by showers and dressing rooms for patrons of the swimming pools located behind.

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### 7 - DESCRIPTION

14. Dance Pavilion Site

The dance pavilion was originally on the site of the large swimming pool. The undocumented wooden structure featured a stage and was converted into the Meridian Little Theater before its demolition in the 1930s.

### 15. Alligator Pond, 1909

The water for the twenty-foot-long pond is supplied from a rustic sandstone fountain at its west end. At the opposite end a small bridge of similar masonry arches over the water. The pond itself is edged in sandstone and the fence surrounding it is of heavy wire mesh between sandstone posts. A live alligator inhabits the pond and its tiny island.

### 16. Lagoon, 1909-1910

The largest original feature of Highland Park was the duck pond or "lagoon," as it was called in contemporary newspaper articles. The free-form body of water, now fenced, is the home of dozens of live animals, including deer, goats, peacocks, and geese.

### 17. Greenhouse, probably 1909

The greenhouse unfortunately was demolished recently because of its poor condition. Mentioned in a 1909 narrative, the structure was a key element in the picturesque portion of the park, along with the lagoon, alligator pond, fountain, and bridge. No documentation other than oral descriptions survive for the long building with glass and wood arches.

#### 18. Toilets, 1909

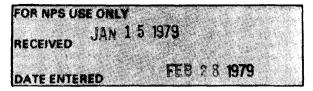
The small gentlemen's toilet is located at the south entrance of the park where in 1909 equestrians were allowed to enter. Although the structure is several hundred yards from the main body of the park, it is near the open areas still used as ballfields. Of native sandstone, the rectangular building has a low-pitched hip roof. The hitching posts described in early newspapers as being in the area are no longer extant.

19. Amphitheater, ca. 1909-1913 On the sloped surface of the easternmost boundary of Highland Park is a simple terraced area used as an amphitheater. Roughly thirty feet wide, the terraced strips are defined by sandstone facings.

### 20 and 21. Picnic Shelters, ca. 1909-1913

In the western sections of the park are two octagonal sandstone picnic shelters forty feet in diameter. The rubble masonry piers support the low peaked roofs of each shelter, and four sides of each are enclosed with low masonry walls capped with a wide stone coping.

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7 - DESCRIPTION

Features added since the original building program:

22. Zehler Monument

The white marble monument memorializes Frank M. Zehler, a courageous Meridian fireman who in 1901 lost his life in a firefighting effort. Erected in 1901 at the intersection of 23rd Avenue and 4th Street in downtown Meridian, the monument was part of a fountain over an artesian well. It was moved to Highland Park in the 1920s.

23. Swimming Pool, 1932 In 1932, the large swimming pool and smaller children's pool were constructed on the site of the dance pavilion.

24. Kendallwood Craft Center The one-story brick commercial building faces 19th Street in the northwest corner of the park. It was built in the 1930s as a privately owned grocery store, for at that time the small parcel of land on which it stands was owned by the Hasty family, who operated the store and lived in a small adjacent house. Today the former store building serves as part of the crafts program directed by the Parks and Recreation Department.

25. Airplane Relocated to the park in 1972, the small fighter jet was donated by the Mississippi Air National Guard (TAC) Unit 186, Meridian.

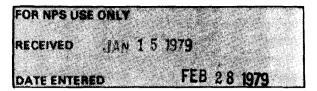
26. Train and Jimmy Rogers Museum Constructed on the grounds in 1976, the wood frame depot-like structure houses memorabilia pertaining to country music star Jimmy Rogers (1897-1933), a native of Meridian. Rogers combined the elements of Negro and railroad worker music to create a soulful sound that made him famous in the South. The train is a 1917 Baldwin steam engine from the Susquehanna and New York line. It was later used by the Meridian and Bigbee Railroad, a local line which donated it to the City of Meridian in 1953 as a memorial to all deceased railroad men. It was relocated to Highland Park in 1970.

27. Picnic Shelters The recently built shelters are concrete construction.

28. Tennis Courts, 1974 The four tennis courts have concrete surfaces.

29. Frank Cochran Center, 1976 The large metal warehouse building was completed in 1976 to house various indoor recreation activities.

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### 7 - DESCRIPTION

30. Parks and Recreation Department Office One-story concrete-block structure with flat roof; built in the 1960s.

### 8 - SIGNIFICANCE

introduced through the park. In spite of these apparent intrusions, Highland Park continues to reflect its origin as a pleasure park in the European tradition. The quality of its architectural and sculptural elements testifies to the expenditure of time and money by citizens who worked for many years to secure the best facility for Meridian. The Dentzel carousel is one of only two extant two-animal-abreast Dentzels and has been described as "a prime example of the workmanship of the Dentzel firm" by Frederick Fried, author of <u>A</u> <u>Pictorial History of the Carousel</u>. It is also one of the few in the United States that retains its original "scenery" of oil paintings. Of the 327 existing American carousels recorded by the National Carousel Association, that in Highland Park is one of 85 considered worthy of total restoration. The City of Meridian Parks and Recreation Department is presently planning the preservation of the Dentzel carousel as the first step in restoring Highland Park to its original beauty.

### 9 - MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Gray, William F. Meridian Illustrated. Meridian, Miss.: Tell Farmer, 1904.

Knight, Sadie. Interviewed by Gregory B. Free, restoration-preservation specialist with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, at Meridian, Miss., June 8, 1978.

Lauderdale County, Miss. Chancery Clerk. Deed Book III:366.

Lauderdale County, Miss. Chancery Clerk. Map Book I:59.

The Meridian [Miss.] Star, April 28, 1908; April 28, 1909.

Smith, Mary Earl. Interviewed by Gregory B. Free, restoration-preservation specialist with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, at Meridian, Miss., June 8, 1978.

# **6** SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AR	EAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	ECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	
PREHISTORIC	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	XCOMMUNITY PLANNING	XLANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION
1400-1499	ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	LAW	SCIENCE
1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS		SCULPTURE
1600-1699	ARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	XART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER
1800-1899	COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPORTATION
<u>X</u> 1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	XOTHER (SPECIFY)
		INVENTION		Recreation

SPECIFIC DATES

**BUILDER/ARCHITECT** 

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Meridian, Mississippi, began a phenomenal period of growth which lasted until about 1910. Between the years 1880 and 1910, its population increased from 4,000 to over 23,000, and by the end of the period Meridian was the largest city in Mississippi. By the late 1880s, six railroads intersected at Meridian, taking advantage of the strategic location of the city amid the agricultural wealth of Mississippi and the mineral wealth of west Alabama. Before the turn of the century, it boasted monumental public buildings and a handsome opera house.

A group of prominent businessmen who had led the city to prosperity believed that Meridian was in need of a park, or, as they called it at the time, "a playground." Obviously inspired by world's fairs like that in Chicago in 1893, Atlanta's International Cotton Exposition in 1895, and the St. Louis Exposition of 1902, the merchants informally organized the Meridian Fair and Exposition Corporation in 1904. The group consisted of I. A. Marks, H. M. Threefoot, Krutcher Threefoot, Sam Rothenberg, Marks Rothenberg, and W. Rosenbaum. A large parcel of land in west Meridian was acquired by the group, but no plans materialized.

In 1906 the Meridian Fair and Exposition Corporation was dissolved and its property turned over to a non-profit trust, with Krutcher Threefoot as trustee. By April, 1908, a City Park Association had been formed, with merchant I. A. Marks, a member of the earlier corporation and undeniably the driving force behind the park effort, serving as the first president. The <u>Meridian Star</u> announced in April, 1908, that the park would soon be open, quoting I. A. Marks: "One of the first buildings to be erected will be a handsome and modern ladies dressing and toilet room" and "Architect Shaw is now busy laying out the ground according to our present plans. . . "

It was more than a year before the park was officially opened, however. Another article in the <u>Star</u> from April, 1909, was titled "The Finishing Touches to the Park." "Architect Shaw" had been replaced by superintendent Adolph R. Arp, a landscape specialist, and the official name Highland Park had been determined. The article described in great detail the completed features of the park, including the streetcar platform, promenade, bandstand, toilets, and streetlights. Under construction were the lagoon, bridge, alligator pond, greenhouse, and carousel house. Features continued to be added to the park until 1913, when, after five years of construction, the City Park Association officially deeded the property to the City of Meridian. That same year a statue of I. A. Marks, founder of the park, was dedicated on the grounds.

Since the execution of the original building program, many new features have been incorporated into the park, the most significant being the two swimming pools built in the 1930s, a jet fighter donated in 1970, and the Frank Cochran Center and the Jimmy Rogers Museum, both added in 1976. The dance pavilion and the greenhouse have been demolished and paved roads

# **9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Charles, Barbara. "Merry-Go-Round." Smithsonian Magazine 3 (1972):40-47.

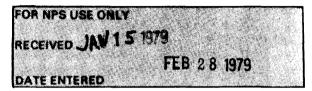
Free, Gregory B., restoration-preservation specialist with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson. Inspections of Highland Park, December, 1977; February, June, 1978.

Fried, Frederick.	A Pictorial	History	of	the	Carousel.	New	York:	Α.	s.	Barnes,	1964.
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<b>10</b> GEOGRAPHICAL DATA					
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION					
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thence southward along the east					
of State Boulevard, thence east	along the n	orth line of Sta	ate Boulevard (	<u>to its interse</u>	<u>ct</u> ion
LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTI	ES FOR PROPERT	IES OVERLAPPING ST	ATE OR COUNTY BO	UNDARIES	
STATE	CODE	COUNTY		CODE	
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	<u> </u>	CODE	
<b>11 FORM PREPARED BY</b> NAME / TITLE Gregory B. Free, R					
Susan Perry, Publi	c Relations	Ullice, City of	DATE	ks & Recreatio	<u>n</u> Dept.
Mississippi Depart	mont of Arch	ives and History		1 0 7 0	
STREET & NUMBER	ment of Alch	ives and miscor	TELEPHONE		
P. O. Box 571			601-354-73	326	
CITY OR TOWN		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	STATE		
Jackson			Mississip	pi 39205	
12 STATE HISTORIC PRES		N OFFICER CH		ON	
NATIONAL		E			
As the designated State Historic Preservation hereby nominate this property for inclusion criteria and procedures set forth by the Nation	n in the National R				
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIG		Upon R. In	Mind	·····	·
TITLE State Historic Preser	vation Offic	er	DATE Jai	nuary 10, 1979	
FOR NPS USE ONLY I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPER	TY IS INCLUDED	IN THE NATIONAL REI	GISTER		
1. Charles ats	tung	$\rightarrow$	DATE 🥕	28 79	
ATTEST: MUMIT	ER /			7/79	
CHIERON RESISTERTION				. , .	

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10 - GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

with the north line of 16th Street, thence east along the north line of 16th Street to its intersection with the west line of 37th Avenue, thence north along the west line of 37th Avenue to its intersection with the south line of 17th Street, extended, thence west along the south of 17th Street extended to its intersection with the center line of Gallagher Creek thence northerly along the center line of Gallagher Creek, as it meanders to its intersection with the south line of 19th Street to the point of beginning, all lying within and being a part of the SE 1/4 and SW 1/4 of Section 12, T.GN-R. 15E, and containing 40 acres more or less.

