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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM**

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries. Use letter quality printers in 12 pitch. Use only 25% or greater cotton content bond paper.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Denver Mountain Parks

B. Associated Historic Contexts

Denver Mountain Parks, Denver, Colorado 1912 - 1941

C. Geographical Data

Entire Denver Mountain Park System:
Within the Counties of: Jefferson, Clear Creek, Douglas, and Grand. Adjacent to the towns and cities of: Bergen Park, Evergreen, Kittredge, Idledale, Morrison, Indian Hills, Conifer, and Winter Park.

() See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Barbara Sudley

Signature of certifying official

3-16-90

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Beth Boland

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

5/18/90

Date

E. Statement of Historic Contexts

Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

DENVER MOUNTAIN PARK SYSTEM, DENVER, COLORADO 1912-1941

Introduction

This multiple property submission includes a general description and history of the entire Denver Mountain Park System and seven individual nominations for the earliest parks and two scenic mountain drives within Jefferson County. The Mountain Park Districts include:

- Red Rocks Park/Mount Morrison Civilian Conservation Corp Camp/Morrison Park District
- Corwina/O'Fallon/Pence Park District
- Dedisse Park District
- Bergen Park District
- Genesee Park District
- Colorow Point Park District
- Lookout Mountain Park District

The two scenic mountain drives included in this submission are:

- Bear Creek Park Scenic Mountain Drive
- Lariat Trail Scenic Mountain Drive

The Denver Mountain Park System, constructed between 1912 and 1941, is a nationally significant series of foothill and mountain parks interconnected by scenic mountain drives to create a connected rural park and parkway system. This system of parks and scenic drives is a unique linkage of mountain lands that set the stage for regional open space planning in Colorado, expanded the normal vision of urban park and parkways, and well preserved scenic and recreational mountain resources within easy reach of the entire Denver population. The two property types are Denver Mountain Parks and Scenic Mountain Drives. Each property type is represented in this submission.

The Mountain Parks System consists of 31 named parks and 16 unnamed parcels encompassing approximately 13,488 acres of mountain and foothill land owned by the city of Denver. All except Winter Park are within a 62 mile radius of the city and are linked by a series of roadways. The entire system is connected by loop and spur scenic drives to allow for easy car access. Genesee, the first park, was purchased in 1912 and Lariat Trail, the first scenic drive, was completed in 1913. By 1941 all park areas were purchased and significant development was complete. The system is outside the corporate limits of Denver in four different counties. To allow this unusual and creative system it took a United States senate bill, a state resolution, a city charter amendment, the vision and foresight of Denver's Mayor Speer, and the dedication of a multitude of Colorado citizens.

The Denver Mountain Park System was planned and designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., nationally recognized landscape architect; Saco Rienk DeBoer, Denver landscape architect; and Jules Jacques Benois Benedict and Burnham Hoyt,
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prominent Denver architects. They were all recognized nationally for their excellent design and planning achievements during the early part of the twentieth century.

The Denver Mountain Park System has an exceptional natural and cultural environment. It contains all of Colorado's life zones--the plains, foothills, mountain, subalpine, and alpine with wildlife ranging from prairie dogs on the plains to elk herds and ptarmigan in the mountains. The park elevations range from around 6,000 to over 12,000 feet and they have highly varied ecological systems, dramatic changes in landform and perennial mountain streams. There are such diverse cultural resources as one of the few intact Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camps , the world renowned Red Rocks Amphitheater, and the grave site of William Frederick Cody, better known as "Buffalo Bill", and the Winter Park ski area.

The entire Mountain Park System, excluding Winter Park due to its different location and function, still works as a connected mountain park system with the original intent still intact. Winter Park is not connected to the other parks through a road system designed for that purpose and is located far from the other parks on the west side of the Continental Divide. Other property, such as the undeveloped lands purchased in order to preserve the scenic views in the parks, may be eligible for their significance to conservation.

There were three national movements which were major influences in the planning and development of the Denver Mountain Park System: City Beautiful Movement, National and State Park Movements, and Civilian Conservation Corps Movement.

City Beautiful Movement/City Planning

The City Beautiful Movement began at the turn of the century, due in large part to the Chicago World's Fair Columbian Exposition of 1893, also known as the "White City". This movement brought about an unprecedented awareness of city planning and encouragement to cities to become more beautiful and pleasant places in which to live. The movement began at a time when people cared little

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about the appearance and quality of the living experience in American cities, when cities were growing at an enormous pace in an unplanned, haphazard manner with little thought for city park systems.

Denver was certainly no exception. In the 1890s city planning did not exist in Denver. It was not until 1904 when heights, manner of construction, and class of building heights were regulated. Private dreams, schemes, and greed shaped the city's growth, not planning for an entire unit such as a city. The frontier ethic of rugged individualism prevailed and there was little sense of community and virtually no attention was paid to the human costs of urbanization. Parks were conspicuously absent and where park lands existed, squatters often moved in leaving them barely distinguishable from other vacant land in the city.

In the early twentieth century, the man who saved Denver from urban chaos was Robert Walter Speer. Mayor Speer, one of Denver's most innovative and powerful leaders, was elected to office in 1904 and was the mayor, almost continuously, until he died in 1918. He had been inspired by the Columbian Exposition and was a strong supporter of the City Beautiful Movement. Speer's greatest legacy was not any single plan or program, but the City Beautiful dream. He implemented a persistent and creative effort to transform a dusty, dirty town into a functional and beautiful city. He had a three staged plan which included the development of the civic center, urban parks and parkways, and the Denver Mountain Parks. Speer hired the champions of the City Beautiful Movement and the greatest park planners and designers of the time. He used such well known designers as Charles Robinson and the Olmsted Brothers, Inc. to develop plans and recommendations. Speer had many miles of streets graded and paved, implemented a height ordinance to preserve the views of the mountains, worked to ban billboards, developed the Denver's Park and Parkway System (listed on the National Register in 1986), and created a City Forester's Office to work on the greening of Denver.

All of these improvements directly related to the Denver Mountain Park System which was an extension of the Denver Parks and Parkway System. The plan included the construction of scenic drives and parks and the preservation of mountain views and the banning of billboards. During Speer's reign the concept of the Denver Mountain Parks System became a reality. Denver not only implemented the ideas of the City Beautiful Movement, but extended those ideas into regional planning.

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The Denver Mountain Parks created a regional open space system within the Rocky Mountains which preserved prime visual areas outside the city limits and created a series of protected open spaces which control the pattern of mountain and foothill development near Denver.

As evidence of the early cooperative planning efforts between local, state, and federal entities to create the mountain park system there were several laws enacted to facilitate the process. A city charter amendment, passed on May 21, 1912, provided a tax levy for the acquisition, development and maintenance of land outside the city limits of Denver for parks and parkways. A state resolution, which allowed for the creation of the Denver Mountain Park System, was passed on April 15, 1913. This resolution allowed cities to acquire lands for parks, pleasure grounds, parkways, boulevards, and roads outside the corporate limits of any city. It also granted cities the power to acquire, control, and regulate purchased lands by creating their own regulations to prevent pollution of water supplies, to prevent billboards from marring the scenery and to prohibit the licensing and sale of intoxicating liquors within one mile of any park. Cities were given full police power and municipal control to manage, improve, and maintain acquired lands. In August of 1914, President Woodrow Wilson signed into law Senate Bill 5197, which allowed cities to purchase land from the federal government. Soon after this bill was passed, the city of Denver bought over 7,000 acres of Federal land for mountain parks. These three laws, which created the Denver Mountain Park System, became models for similar park systems across the country.

While the development of the Mountain Park System was primarily influenced by the City Beautiful movement, it also incorporated the ideals of the National and State Park Movements and early conservation concepts.

National and State Park Movement/Conservation

The creation of Denver's Mountain Park System occurred during the same time as the Bronx River Parkway in New York, which is one of the very earliest systems in the nation. It also occurred after most of the urban Denver Park and Parkway System had developed and it became an extension of that system into the Rocky Mountains.

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The National Park Service Movement, during the late 19th century and the early 20th century, brought an awareness to Colorado of the state's unique natural resources and the need for protection and preservation. The Denver Mountain Park System had already purchased its first lands and was building its first access roads when Rocky Mountain National Park was being considered. Rocky Mountain National Park was established in 1915 and exemplified the benefits both of conservation and tourism. The Denver Mountain Park Commission recognized these benefits and incorporated many of the National Park ideals into the Denver Mountain Parks System.

The National Park Service was in dire need for other park agencies to preserve distinguished lands for day use and scenic attractions to relieve them of many unqualified parks applying for national preservation in the early 1900's. The Denver Mountain Park System provided this outlet and preserved highly scenic and day use lands. Denver was far ahead of other Colorado counties in terms of open space preservation, and far ahead of most of the nation. It was through tremendous foresight, the recognition of the importance of land preservation, and the need for park land preservation for a healthy society, which led to the creation of the Denver Mountain Park System.

By the end of the 19th century, Frederick Law Olmsted, through his many nationally noted projects, had established an awareness and interest in the need for park lands. Olmsted had designed Central Park, Prospect Park, Stanford University Campus and wrote what is now noted as one of the most significant historic documents of the state park movement concerning Yosemite Park. His beliefs affected Denver and Major Speer and helped create an interest in the preservation of scenic and natural areas. He believed that magnificent scenery would uplift the health and spirit of man and called parks the "lungs of the city." When doing the 19th century Yosemite preservation study, he stated "the enjoyment of scenery employs the mind without fatigue and yet exercises it; tranquilizes it and yet enlivens it; and thus, through the influence of the mind over the body, gives the effect of refreshing rest and reinvigoration to the whole system." He felt strongly that the government needed to withhold scenic lands for the enjoyment of all the people. His beliefs set the basic underlying concept which was later followed by his son, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. in the planning of the Denver Mountain Park System.

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Conservation and preservation of both natural and visual resources was a priority from the beginning in developing the Mountain Parks. The prime visual resources were preserved through land purchases. Natural resources were preserved through laws, education, and cooperation with adjacent public and private land owners. No timbering or hunting was allowed in any mountain park. In addition, no hunting was allowed within fifty miles of any Denver Mountain Park. After the very early years, no camping was allowed except in designated areas. These early measures, similar to regulations within National Parks, led to excellent preservation of the natural environment.

Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) Movement

The Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) is the final nationwide movement which had an influence on the development of the mountain parks. The CCC was responsible for the construction of significant portions of the Park System including Red Rocks Amphitheater and the reconstruction of Bear Creek Canyon Road.

During the nationwide depression of 1929, Franklin Roosevelt formulated the Civilian Conservation Corp. The CCC movement provided employment and a healthy outdoor experience for thousands of young men and enabled them to acquire skills that could be used later in life. The movement sought to conserve not only the landscape but the nation's human resources; in both respects its accomplishments were a tremendous success.

The Civilian Conservation Corps, was a well organized, efficient and quality operation. In 1935, the peak year of the CCC, there were 452 camps distributed throughout the United States. Haphazard, unplanned work was not allowed; for every park an approved master plan was required, showing the intended ultimate development of the whole park and the inter-relationship of all projects for which funds and man-hours would be requested. For every project there had to be detailed plans, approved by the professional staff in the Washington headquarters. The superintendents of each camp were usually landscape architects, foresters, engineers, or experienced practical construction men. Due to the influx of designers and the quality of work required, experimentation in design was fostered. A progressive attitude toward planning and design was established.

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George Cranmer, the Denver Manager of Improvements and Parks from 1935 through the depression, capitalized on the CCC movement to carry forward the earlier ideals of Major Speer and the City Beautiful Movement. He worked jointly with the federal government to get mountain park projects constructed. The CCC provided labor so Red Rocks Amphitheater, the largest CCC project in the nation, could be accomplished. The CCC employees rebuilt portions of the scenic drive along Bear Creek and raised it out of the floodplain; improved the scenic drive to Genesee Mountain; built retaining walls along dangerous mountain road edges; and built the fireplaces, outhouses and several mountain park shelters. Their natural construction materials were readily available on the site, therefore the designs fit well into the landscape and natural environment of the mountain parks. The CCC movement enabled difficult mountain projects to be accomplished with quality workmanship, local materials, and innovative design solutions.

The two CCC camp sites still exist as part of the Mountain Park System. Camp Mount Morrison, at Red Rocks, is still intact with all the original bunk houses, kitchen house, equipment storage sheds and blacksmith shops. The structures and grounds have been well kept. Katherine Craig Park still has some of the original barracks, but the other buildings have been removed.

Denver Mountain Park System Historical Development

The first suggestion of developing a Denver Mountain Park System occurred in 1901 when the Denver Chamber of Commerce asked the city to consider a mountain park system for the enjoyment of city residents and the enhancement of tourism in Denver. The notion of such a far reaching concept occurred during a time when cities across the nation were beginning to think of urban beautification, city planning, and urban design to improve the health and livability of cities. The mountain park system took place when automobiles were rapidly transforming cities and increasing access to rural areas of America. It began during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, when the country was led by a man greatly concerned about land conservation and an interest and understanding of the west and its tremendous natural resources. It began during the time when the National Park Service was established in the Department of Interior, when people across the nation sensed the need for protection and management of natural resources, especially in the west, where unusual landforms, natural resources and scenic

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landscapes existed. The early 20th century atmosphere in the nation was right for the generation and implementation of the uncommon concept called the Denver Mountain Park System.

After the idea of a Denver Mountain Park System was first suggested, a "Special Park Committee" within the Denver city government was formed to look at the Mountain Park concept. In their 1912 annual report the committee stated:

"A Mountain Park for Denver will be the first step, and, perhaps the greatest step in the great movement of making our mountains available to the people. It is Denver's chance to open a gateway into the mountains, and to take the lead in making Colorado more attractive to tourists than Switzerland."

"Our conception of a Mountain Park is a chain or series of parks somewhat in the form of a semi-circle, commencing at a point in the vicinity of Lookout Mountain, a tract of Bergen Park, a tract along Bear Creek above Evergreen, a tract in Spruce Park, a tract in Eden Park and following Turkey Creek Canyon to its mouth. Each park should be connected with all the others by a well-built road, and each end of the chain should be connected with Denver by a splendid drive...."

A 1913 report further defined the purpose of the Mountain Parks:

"To assure perpetually to the residents of Denver the sublime scenery of the Rockies, the preservation of native forests, and having a pleasure ground in the mountains for the thousands of annual visitors to the city easily accessible."

On May 21, 1912 an amendment to the City Charter passed providing an annual tax levy for acquiring land outside the limits of the City of Denver for parks and parkways. This was a critical piece of legislation which showed the support of the citizens of Denver for the project.

Immediately after the amendment passed, the Olmsted Brothers were engaged to work on the mountain parks. This contract was part of Mayor Robert Walter Speer's City Beautiful dream for Denver and included the study of the civic center, the mountain park system and the boulevards and roadways in connection with each.

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In Frederick Olmsted, Jr.'s 1912 memorandum to the city, he stated how important and significant the mountain park project was, and provided suggestions on how to create the system and formulated the entire order and design concept for the project. His suggestions included ideas on how to plan and implement the following major items:

- To design a first-class road system with access to the best mountain scenery.
- To construct the necessary roads through cooperation with state and county road authorities.
- To provide at least two approaches from Denver using the existing road to Golden and the ridges which run to Lookout Mountain.
- To protect the important scenery.
- To purchase and develop sufficient park lands; to provide resting places, picnic areas, camp grounds, shelters, hotels and other facilities.
- To obtain adequate funds within one year to begin construction on one complete link in the park system.

Every item Olmsted suggested in the memorandum was carried out and many of the prime parcels of land in his acquisition plan were purchased. In fact, his recommendations from the 1912 memorandum were so well received that the Mountain Park Commission began purchasing and improving mountain parks and roads while Olmsted was still generating the 1914 Plan. Parcels in Genesee park were purchased as early as 1912 and road construction for the Lariat Trail began in 1913. The official opening of the park was on August 27, 1913, six months before Olmsted's Plan was submitted. Genesee was easily accessible to Denver residents, had magnificent views, and had extremely diverse topography which allowed for a variety of recreational experiences. Twenty-four parcels of land were purchased merely for preservation of attractive scenery and views which could later be developed, if necessary. Included in the land purchases for scenic preservation were foreground lands. Many acres south of Genesee Mountain were purchased so views from this spot would remain undisturbed. These parcels remained undeveloped and unnamed today.

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In addition, the Commission enforced a city law to keep billboards off scenic drives and worked to help keep private landowners from allowing billboards in view of scenic roads. Within the next year Lookout Mountain Park was purchased. This park was very significant since it allowed beautiful views to Denver and the vast plains beyond.

On January 20, 1914 Olmsted submitted his study entitled Report on Land Recommended for Acquirement, To Accompany Plan Number 58 to the Mountain Park Commission which gave them a clear plan to follow. The plan was extensive in scope and recommended 41,310 acres be included in the Denver Mountain Park System. The tracts he recommended ranged from a few to several thousand acres. Between 1912 and 1941, the city of Denver only acquired 13,488 acres. Many of these were tracts which Olmsted recommended and others were gifts to the system which tied in well with Olmsted's original concept. His plan indicated and prioritized which parcels to purchase.

The purchase of these park lands was a joint effort between the Federal, State, County and City governments. Pike National Forest, the State Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation and Jefferson County Open Space later purchased other parcels which were recommended by Olmsted. The majority of the land proposed in Olmsted's plan was ultimately preserved as open space.

The Mountain Park Commission played a major role in the development of the Denver Mountain Park System. It was made up of dedicated and able citizens who worked diligently to see the system built. They met approximately every two weeks and had a number of subcommittees, each with a particular focus. The subcommittees consisted of roads, publicity, park attraction and accommodations, transportation, land purchase, donations, and national parks. Their purpose was to ensure that the scenery of the Rockies was perpetually available to all Denver residents, that native forests were preserved, and that there was an easily accessible park land in the mountains for the thousands of annual visitors.

The Mountain Park Commission wanted to ensure that the mountain park system was a civilized recreational experience and only a wilderness experience if people desired to leave and wander deeper into the park lands. As early as 1918 the attractive Chief Hosa Lodge was opened in Genesee Park to ensure that park users had a place in which to eat and relax along their journey.

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Close to the lodge was a campground with electric lights and running water easily accessible to automobiles. The campground was called the Municipal Tent Colony and had tent houses which could be rented to provide a convenient and civilized camping experience. This tent colony, established in 1918, was perhaps the first of its kind in the nation.

For people wishing to gain a more healthful wilderness hiking experience, the Beaver-Brook Trail was constructed in 1919. The trail began at Windy Saddle on the Lariat Trail, travelled through diverse scenic topography above Clear Creek and ultimately linked to the Chief Hosa Lodge in Genesee Park. The trail is still in use today.

Early parcels included relatively level ground within Lookout Mountain, Genesee, Filius and Bergen Parks so recreational activities such as picnicking and ball games could occur.

By 1918, the Mountain Parks consisted of ten dispersed tracts of land, embracing a total of five square miles, which ranged in elevation from 7,000 to 8,000 feet. All were relatively easily accessible by automobile. The majority of the parks were connected by a circle loop drive which provided diverse mountain recreational areas. Each park had its own unique environment and focus. Some included over a thousand acres while others were less than a half acre in size. Some were purchased because of their views, others because of the topography, while still others were chosen due to the rock formations, vegetation, or water availability. Yet as a system, all the parks worked together well to create a unique mountain recreational experience for urban dwellers from the plains.

Even during these very early years, construction of buildings and structures was a high priority. By 1918, eight shelter houses, stone fireplaces, spring and pump houses and rustic picnic tables and benches existed. The Mountain Parks Commission planned pavilions, campgrounds, ball fields, golf courses and lakes as early as 1915.

Up to 1918 the parks were all within the montane life zone. These were the highest mountain lands considered easily accessible to the Denver residents.

Yet, due to the development of the scenic drives, higher mountain lands were potentially within reach. The Commission expanded its vision and focused on

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parcs in the high altitude subalpine and alpine zone. Work had already begun on a road that would ultimately provide access to the summit of Mount Evans and would be the highest auto road in North America. The Park Commission established a separate committee to work with the National Forest Service to have Mount Evans preserved as a National Park, but this effort was unsuccessful.

By the 1920s the city added six new parks to the system and constructed many additional facilities. The dam for Bear Creek in Evergreen at Dedisse Park was in the planning stages. Perhaps more importantly was the Park Commission's sensitivity to the development of the system. By 1920 many people and automobiles were using the Denver Mountain Parks, in fact some of the parks were being impacted. Certain areas had heavily compacted soils, erosion, and a noticeable loss of wildflowers due to overuse. As a solution, the Parks Commission purchased and developed several parks off the main circle loop west of Evergreen along Turkey and Cub Creeks and encouraged users to disperse and preserve the original park lands.

By 1926, the Denver Mountain Parks consisted of 10,240 acres including Summit Lake Park at Mount Evans at an elevation of 12,740 feet. The parks featured a golf course and fine clubhouse at Dedisse, a museum containing relics of Buffalo Bill, with his grave and Cody Memorial on the top of Lookout Mountain; an animal enclosure in Genesee with 76 head of elk, 40 buffalo and 13 mountain sheep, playgrounds, shelter houses, comfort stations and hundreds of fireplaces and tables scattered throughout all of the parks. Users had a wide variety of parks and routes from which to choose.

The Parks Commission continued their work by completing construction of a lodge at Echo Lake in the subalpine territory in 1926 and trying to acquire Red Rocks Park from owner John Brisben Walker. Finally in 1928 this significant park acquisition occurred. Now the ultimate park environment was part of the Denver Mountain Park System. Red Rocks was the crowning touch on an already incredible system. This park provided the system with enormous red sandstone rock formations, Mount Morrison, the foothills lifezone, and spectacular views across the unique hogback formation to the city of Denver.

The design of Red Rocks Amphitheater, by prominent local architect, Burnham Hoyt, was based upon the natural rock formations of the intensely red sandstone monoliths which naturally existed throughout the park. Native sandstone from the site was used throughout, with seating carefully contoured into the hillside and

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gigantic natural formations left on three sides. This remarkable architectural triumph has been written up in such nationally recognized magazines as The Architectural Forum and was honored by the Museum of Modern Art in New York City in the 1950s as "one of the fifty outstanding examples of American architecture of the past decade." The construction of the amphitheater began in 1936 and was completed in 1941. The work was done by 120 men of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

In the 1930s, the Denver Mountain Parks were fortunate enough to be chosen as work sites for the CCC. Two camps were placed within the Denver Mountain Parks; one on the north part of the system and one on the south. The men within these camps did many mountain park projects in addition to the construction for Red Rocks Amphitheater. They moved into the mountain parks in 1935 and worked on constructing roads and park buildings until 1941. Their quality work and sensitive design is still clearly evident throughout the mountain parks.

By 1930 the Denver Mountain Park System had purchased nearly all the lands which make up the present day system. The Echo Lake Lodge provided food and overnight accommodations in the subalpine zone; Evergreen Lake had been completed in Dedisse Park along with a warming house for ice skaters and the Pakaska Teepee, which housed artifacts of Buffalo Bill Cody, had long since been completed.

By 1938 Daniels Park, Katherine Craig, and O'Fallon Parks had been acquired and additional lands were added to Genesee Park. The only purchases after 1938 included Newton Park and Winter Park.

Under the guidance of George Cranmer, the Denver Manager of Improvements and Parks, Winter Park, a ski area on the west side of Berthoud Pass was purchased in 1939 and developed as a Denver Mountain Park for skiing. This was one of the last Denver Mountain Park purchases. Winter Park has a much different purpose than the rest of the parks. The mountain parks work as a system and create a unique mountain experience which is difficult to match anywhere in the nation.

The Mountain Scenic Drives share equal importance with the parks. As in other park and parkway systems, the purpose was to provide pleasant, comfortable, scenic access to a series of parks. Following the invention of the automobile and the rapid sales which followed, a nationwide road building program began which allowed a concept such as a regional park and parkway system to be viable.

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The increased use of the automobile allowed urban park systems to expand outside city boundaries into nearby rural landscapes. The Denver Mountain Park System was based around the concept of easy accessibility by car, one of the prime considerations in Olmsted, Jr.'s plan.

By the 1920s over nine million automobiles were in use in America. During those years, the Denver Mountain Parks were very popular and heavily used. Olmsted Jr.'s plan ensured that the roads in the mountain park system were well designed and properly located. The Park Commission remained in close contact with Jefferson County and the state agencies during the planning and construction of the scenic drives. These three entities had many joint road projects in which each contributed dollars, construction, and/or maintenance to projects in conjunction with the mountain parks.

Because the roadways in the mountain park system were located in steep mountainous terrain, their construction involved precise engineering and minimum design standards. The standards established that no road exceed a 6% grade, all were to be a minimum width of 20 feet, and no radius smaller than 50 feet. The scenic drives were constructed up steep slopes, along tight mountain canyons, through enormous sandstone outcrops of Red Rocks Park and even up to the inclement mountain zones above timberline. Through all of this, the roads had gentle grades, were wide and easy to maneuver and provided a pleasant driving experience. They not only connected gently sloping park lands, but were also scenic drives to connect mountain tops with canyon valleys, and plains life zones with tundra zones. Denver created a civilized mountain park experience with gentle road grades and beautiful mountain views.

The mountain park system's first scenic drive began in 1913 with the construction of the Lariat Trail from Golden to the top of Lookout Mountain. The drive provided two approaches from Denver when it was completed in 1915. Following Olmsted's recommendations, the drive began at the Lariat Trail, went up to the top of Lookout and looped around to Evergreen, down Bear Creek Canyon into Morrison and back to Denver by way of Morrison Road. Soon after the completion of the first, additional loops were added to connect Deer Creek, Turkey Creek and Cub Creek Parks into an overall scenic drive system.

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In 1918, the construction began on the Squaw Pass Road from Bergen Park to Echo Lake to create another link in the system of scenic loop drives. In 1928, the Chicago Creek forest road was completed from Idaho Springs to Echo Lake. This route was referred to as "the backdoor to Echo Lake." The Chicago Creek road was laid out along the route of an early trail that later became a wagon road. Much of the construction work was done by professors and college students who wanted to work outdoors during summer vacation.

By 1920, the roadway system enabled park users to experience the views of Golden and the prairie provided by the Lariat Trail, Lookout Mountain and Genesee parks. Visitors could fish in Bear Creek, which had been stocked with 300,000 fish in 1918; they could drive through steep canyons; visit the buffalo, elk, and mountain sheep preserves in Genesee; play golf in the open mountain valleys of Dedisse; and picnic in Bergen and Filius parks. The roads allowed for travel from the foothill zone to the mountain and subalpine zones. Visitors experienced the diversity of the vegetation, wildlife, hydrology and climate in a one day automobile drive.

By 1921, the original circle loop was so heavily used that congestion was occurring in Bear Creek Canyon and on the Lariat Trail. The Park Commission, concerned about motorist safety and the preservation of the parks, began to encourage people to take alternate routes. Roads were extended, additional creeks were stocked and new park facilities were developed to disperse the park visitors. By 1930, 8 circle loop scenic drives were completed. The road system reached to Echo Lake, Summit Lake Park and to the top of Mount Evans. This was the highest automobile road in North America and reached an elevation of 14,150 feet at its highest point.

At the top of Mount Evans, a modernistic glass and rock shelter house designed by Denver architect, Edwin Francis, was begun in 1940 and completed in 1941. While the Crest House was not in the Denver Mountain Park System, it attracted park visitors. The Crest House was the highest building in the world when completed. The second highest was Mount Ebrus, Refuge #11 in Europe. The Crest House featured a streamlined design to withstand the 150 mile per hour winds at the summit and metal window frames to absorb heat from the sun to melt the ice on the walls. In September 1979, the Crest House burned, but its streamlined rock walls still stand. It has been officially determined eligible for listing in the National Register.

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Denver Mountain Park System

Because the Denver Mountain Parks are within easy reach of Denver they are still heavily used but are well preserved and remain in good condition. None of the lands have been sold and very few new structures or buildings have been added. There are only two privately owned parcels which are in O'Fallon Park and were private parcels when the O'Fallon family donated the land to the city. No park or portion of a park has ever been sold since the system was developed. No hunting, timbering or logging has been allowed in the park system. Limited camping is only allowed in designated areas. The only tree removal occurred in the 1970s due to beetle kill and it was necessary to minimize the spread of the infestation. Because the unnamed parks have limited access with few roads and trails, the existing flora has been minimally impacted. In the heavily used parks the natural flora have been impacted. Many of the trees that were present when the parks were first formed are still there to provide shade and frame views for visitors. Vast portions of the park lands remain in a natural wilderness condition with little disturbance from man.

A major threat to the parks integrity are utility and transmission towers. The mountain parks have several high mountains close to Denver which make them highly desirable for television and radio transmission towers. Several towers exist within a portion of Lookout Mountain Park which harm the scenic and visual character of one portion of that park.

In general, the historic buildings and structures in the Denver Mountain Park System are in good to fair condition. The small and dedicated mountain parks staff operate on a very limited maintenance budget. The major buildings such as Pahaska Teepee, Chief Hosa Lodge, Red Rocks adobe and Echo Lake Lodge are maintained by the concessionaires. The Denver Mountain Park System is still a relatively unaltered and valuable natural resource for the residents of Denver, the front range region and for Colorado.

The work of several nationally significant professionals in the creation of the Denver Mountain Park System has made a park and parkway system which has outstanding design character and lasting appeal.

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Denver Mountain Park System

Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., planner for the Denver Mountain Park System, was the son of Frederick Law Olmsted. Olmsted, Jr. followed in his father's footsteps in terms of beliefs and design potential. He strongly believed in the need for public parks for the health of city dwellers and pushed for the preservation of public lands for the use of all individuals no matter what their income or race. Olmsted, Jr. with his brother, John Olmsted, started the Olmsted Brothers firm in 1898, just a few years after their father had retired. This firm had many national achievements including Boston and Franklin Park, Arnold Arboretum, Forest Hills Gardens, and the Boston Riverway. Olmsted, Jr. was head of the first landscape architecture curriculum at Harvard University; was on the McMillian Commission which revived the L'Enfant Plan of Washington D.C.; led collaborative teams of architects, landscape architects, and engineers that planned the government's war houses and military cantonments during World War I; was in charge of the California State Park Study of 1929; and provided the survey of the Colorado River Basin.

Saco Rienk DeBoer, a landscape architect, was appointed by Speer in 1910 as Denver's landscape architect. He played a major role in beautifying Denver. His work includes landscaping designs for the Sunken Gardens, Civic Center, City Park, Washington and Cheeseman Parks, the Marion Street Parkway, Speer Boulevard and Forest Drive. He served as Denver's first city planner and help generate the Denver Plan of 1929-1947. He also had a private practice and worked throughout the west. DeBoer worked on sections of the Denver Mountain Park System and provided surveys and designs for the Lariat Trail.

The two architects most recognized in the Denver Mountain Park System are Jules Jacques Benois Benedict and Burnham Hoyt. Benedict did beautiful homes for the wealthy as well as public and commercial structures within the city of Denver. He was well known nationally for his mountain structures and spoke on alpine architecture at the 1922 National A.I.A. Convention in Chicago. This "Mountain Architectural Style" consisted of a combination of timber and native stone which harmonized with the natural surroundings to create structures which seemed to grow from the spot in which they were standing. This style is demonstrated in the many buildings and structures within the Denver Mountain Park System such as

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Denver Mountain Park System

the Genesee Ski Club (demolished), Dedisse Golf Clubhouse, Chief Hosa Lodge and the shelter houses throughout the park system. Outside the mountain parks, Benedict's mountain buildings include attractive homes for Herman Coors, Paul T. Mayo, and James J. Waring. His special mountain style used timber and stone in a manner which integrated the buildings beautifully into the natural setting. National Register properties in Colorado by Benedict include the Littleton Town Hall, and, in Denver, the Kistler-Rodrigues/Dominican Republic Council building, the Arthur House, the Botanic Gardens House, St. Joseph's rectory, St. Thomas Theological Seminary, the Woodward Library, as well as his contributions to Denver's Parks and Parkways.

Burnham Hoyt, considered one of Colorado's finest architect in the twentieth century, was trained at the Beaux-Arts School in New York and won six Beaux-Arts competitions. He designed many structures in both Denver and New York. His work following World War II is considered to present the best examples of the transition from the historic styles into the modern movement. In partnership with his architect brother, Merrill Hoyt, they designed such notable Denver buildings as the St. Martin's Chapel at St. John's Cathedral, Lake Junior High School, Park Hill Branch Library, the Denver Press Club and the Cactus Club Building. In 1926, Burnham left Denver to tour Europe and to design Riverside Church in New York City. He returned to Denver in 1933 when his brother died. Some of Hoyt's most important work followed his return and include a number of large residences: the International style Boettcher School for Crippled Children and his final project in the 1950s, the Denver Public Library building in Civic Center. His crowning achievement, however, was the Red Rocks Park outdoor amphitheater. To date, none of Hoyt's buildings have been listed on the National Register.

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Denver Mountain Park System

The following major scenic drives are found within and form the circle loop drives of the Denver Mountain Parks System:

Lookout Mountain Road (State Highway 68)	From Golden via Lariat Loop, through Lookout Mountain Park to Interstate 70 (US 40)
Colorow Road	From the top of Lookout Mountain to Colorow Point
Bear Creek Canyon Road (State Highway 74 - east)	From Evergreen to Morrison
State Highway 74 North	From Evergreen to Interstate 70 via Bergen Park
Squaw Pass Road (State Highway 68)	from Bergen Park over Squaw Pass to Echo Lake Park
Chicago Creek Road (State Highway 68)	From Idaho Springs to Echo Lake Park and Summit Lake Park. (to summit of Mt. Evans)
Deer Creek Canyon Road (State Highway 124)	From Platte Canyon Road to South Turkey Creek Road
Parmalee - Myers Gulch Road	From Kittredge (Bear Creek) to Indian Hills and Turkey Creek Highway (US 285)

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Denver Mountain Park System

The following major parks are found within the Denver Mountain Parks System:

1. Bear Creek Canyon
2. Bell Park
3. Bergen Park
4. Coal Creek Park
5. Colorow Point Park
6. Corwina Park
7. Cub Creek Park
8. Daniels Park
9. Dedisse Park
10. Deer Creek Park
11. Echo Lake Park
12. Fillius Park
13. Forsberg Park
14. Genesee Park
15. Katherine Craig Park
16. Little Park
17. Lookout Mountain Park
18. Newton Park
19. O'Fallon Park
20. Parmalee Gulch Park
21. Pence Park
22. Red Rocks Park & Mount Morrison Park
23. Starbuck Park
24. Summit Park
25. Turkey Creek Park
26. Winter Park

F. Associated Property Types

I. **Name of Property Type** Denver Mountain Parks

II. Description

General Overview: The Denver Mountain Parks are a series of foothill and mountain park lands of various sizes interconnected by scenic mountain drives which create a connected park system. There are 31 named parks and 16 unnamed parcels totaling approximately 13,488 acres all within 62 miles of the city of Denver. The parks are owned by the City and County of Denver. The Denver Mountain Parks have been developed for recreational use and can be reached by car. The unnamed parcels are undeveloped and most of them are inaccessible by roadways.

The Denver Mountain Parks contain natural, scenic and cultural resources. The scenic and natural resources were the basis for the creation of the Denver Mountain Parks. The 1914 Mountain Park study by the Olmsted Brothers used the following criteria for choosing lands:

- natural charm/scenic value
- fitness for park use (gently sloping or flat mountain lands for a variety of recreational uses)
- ease of access/relation to the main thoroughfares

III. Significance

IV. Registration Requirements

(X) See continuation sheet

(x) See continuation sheet for additional property types

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Denver Mountain Park System (Mountain Parks)

Natural Resources

Elevation

The elevation of the parks starts at approximately 6,000 feet and climbs above timberline to 12,740 feet. This extreme change in elevation provides an unusually varied ecological system in which the geology, soils, vegetation, climate and hydrologic systems interact to create as diverse an ecosystem as can be found anywhere in the nation.

Geology

The geology in the parks consist of steeply tilted slabs of sedimentary rock, granite ravines with nearly vertical side slopes, enormous rock outcrops, exposure from Ice Age activity from the past two million years of broken sorted rock sliding down the mountain sides, and glacial mountain lakes.

Climate

The climate is as varied as its topography and is strongly influenced by the mountain elevations. Wide climatic variations occur within the short distance between the lowest and highest park. People can leave Denver on a calm, warm summer day and, by the time they've reached the highest park, experience blizzard type conditions with snowfall and wind gusts possibly exceeding 100 miles an hour.

Vegetation

Obviously the variation in elevation and climate affects vegetation patterns. An estimated 1500 species of ferns, conifers, and flowering plants grow in the Front Range with the vast majority of them existing within the mountain park system. Within the mountain parks, there is an upper and lower tree line. The trees are not found at the highest elevations due cold, wind, and drought and do not exist at the lowest elevations due to drought. The abrupt rise in altitude provides ecosystem changes which are more clearly defined than those in most

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Denver Mountain Park System (Parks)

Wildlife

Since the Denver Mountain Parks has a wide diversity of ecosystems and thus a variety of food and other resources, it supports a high number of animal species. Due to the wild character which has historically and still exists in the area, animal life that has disappeared from more developed sections of the nation still exist in the Denver Mountain Parks. The wildlife historically and presently include an abundant year around bird population, several species of reptiles including the western rattlesnake, and mammals including herds of mule deer and elk as well as the occasional coyote, bobcat, bighorn sheep and black bear. Fish are also abundant in the mountain streams which have been stocked since the beginning of the development of the Mountain Park System.

Hydrology

Four major creeks exist within the system and each runs through a Denver Mountain Park. These creeks were strongly incorporated into Olmsted's Mountain Park System Plan and are an important park of the system. Much of the mountain park land is dry, with limited availability to water. Water was a necessity to park users, not only for human consumption but for the automobiles. In addition, people are attracted to water and are drawn there for recreation. It is by the water's edge that people relax and become refreshed, especially when coming from Denver on a hot, dusty summer day. Olmsted included mountain park sites along all four of the mountain creeks. He included creek lands which were steep gorges, virtually inaccessible for recreational use, other than visual awe, and also included stream areas which had gentle edges and provided easy pedestrian access.

In addition, the parks have three lakes. There are two natural glacial lakes and one man-made lake. The two glacial lakes are high in the mountains in Echo Lake and Summit Lake Parks. The only man-made lake in the system is at Dedisse Park in the Bear Creek Valley at the town of Evergreen.

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Denver Mountain Park System (Parks)

The majority of the mountain parks are located in the montane zone nearest Denver. They have a climate suited to cool Denver residents during the summer months yet is still accessible during the winter. In addition, this area has vegetation which allows for forest cover and open meadows, contains mountain streams and has a wide range of topography with awe inspiring cliffs and canyons and distant views of the snow capped Rocky Mountains and the broad expanses of the Colorado plains.

By the 1920s, mountain parks had been added in the subalpine and alpine zones after park roads were extended into the difficult higher mountain topography and environment.

Scenic Resources

The Denver Mountain Parks have outstanding views in all four directions. The parks begin within the gently sloping plains environment of Denver and climb to over a thousand feet above timberline. This change in elevation offers a variety of scenic attractions.

Within certain parks there are excellent views across the plains where Denver, Golden, Castle Rock and the plains far to the north, south, and east are exposed. At night the multitude of lights defining Denver and its environs are visible from parks like Red Rocks, Genesee or Lookout. The plains views are so expansive that Indians chose lookout points within the present day mountain parks to watch settlers moving in from the east and see the shifting of the enormous buffalo herds.

Colorow Point and areas within Genesee Park provide spectacular northern mountain views. One can see Clear Creek hundreds of feet below and see the vast expanse of the mountain ranges extending toward Rocky Mountain National Park.

Genesee Mountain, Mount Morrison, and Bergen Mountain are but a few examples of points within the Mountain Park System where views to the south and west unfold. From Genesee one can see Pikes Peak, Mt. Rosalie, James Peak, Arapahoe Peak, Mt. Evans, Bergen, Bald, Meridian, Squaw, Santa Fe, Conifer, Big Bear, Double Header, Independence, Morrison, Douglas, Tom, Three Sisters, Ridge, Topsy and Lookout Mountain.

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Denver Mountain Park System (Parks)

Some of the most spectacular views occur at Summit Lake where there are few obstructions due to the lack of trees and the height of the area. One can see many mountain lakes, patches of snow year around, and a multitude of mountains in all directions including Longs Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park.

These mountain views are only part of the scenic resource. There are also steep canyons along Bear, Deer, Turkey, and Clear Creek as well as magnificent red sandstone outcrops in Red Rocks Park. Enormous rock outcrops and jutting landforms exist throughout many of the parks creating interesting climbing and viewing areas.

Cultural Resources

The mountain park system was created for the enjoyment and preservation of the natural charm of the mountain environment, yet cultural resources have greatly enhanced these natural landscapes. Existing cultural resources include two Civilian Conservation Corp Camps, the pueblo and outdoor amphitheater of Red Rocks Park, the Daniels Ranch, the rustic Pahaska Teepee which held Buffalo Bill Cody's artifacts, Chief Hosa and Echo Lake lodges, animal preserve maintenance structures, the clubhouse for the mountain golf course and the ice skater's warming structure in Dedisse Park, as well as many picnic shelters, comfort stations and fire grills. In addition, the southern styled Patrick house of 1860, which was the collection point for the Victory Highway Toll Road still stands and is well preserved in Genesee Park as a reminder of pre-park history.

The cultural resources, built for the Denver Mountain Park System, exemplify the use of the surrounding natural resources to create architectural forms which blend into the environment and enhance the spirit of the place. Several of the mountain park structures and buildings were designed by well known Denver architect, Jules Jacques Benois Benedict. Most of them combined local timber and native stone which harmonize with the surrounding environment. In many instances the blending was so effective that the structures seem to have grown from the site on which they were standing. In 1922, Benedict was asked to address the American Institute of Architects on the merits of mountain architecture and materials.

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 Denver Mountain Park System (Parks)

Amphitheater. The formation of the CCC was a watershed in history in that it was the first time the federal government developed a large scale social program to relieve unemployment in the United States. The Mount Morrison CCC Camp is one of the few CCC camps which remains intact in the nation. All the original structures in the camp are well preserved.

The Mountain Parks System provided a rare recreational resource that was available to not only the citizens of Denver but those in the surrounding counties. The parks offered a wide variety of recreational activities within the natural setting of the Rocky Mountains.

IV. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Each mountain park has its own individual characteristics which work together to form a diverse open space system. The characteristics of many of the parks are very different, ranging from steep mountain cliffs and rocky stream canyons to gently sloping mountain meadows. Even though specific features may change in each park, there are certain general criteria which remain the same. These are the criteria described within this section.

The primary element which establish the eligibility of a Denver Mountain Park is the integrity of the natural, cultural, and scenic resources. Olmsted's 1912 Memorandum and 1914 Acquisition Plan are based upon land and the natural and scenic resources which that land possessed. Accessible landscapes which provided variety, diversity and uniqueness should be present. Man-made elements are part of the historic character of the parks and should retain most of their original integrity and reflect original use. Most of these features were added after the park land had already been deemed significant due to its natural landscape and accessibility.

To be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the park must be part of the Denver Mountain Park System, be at least 50 years of age and meet the following integrity criteria:

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Denver Mountain Park System (Parks)

- c. Historic wildlife preserves which were established during the period of significance should still exist in a healthy state. Elk and buffalo preserves still exist in the two designated preserves in Genesee Park.

4. Manmade Park Elements

- a. Major historic manmade elements within the Denver Mountain Parks, such as lodges, picnic shelters, golf clubhouse, CCC structures, and the Red Rocks Amphitheater should still exist relatively unaltered with the design and materials of the historic structure still dominant.
- b. There should be a minimum of alterations to buildings and structures to diminish their original integrity and they should still contribute to the feeling, association and significance of the park.

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Denver Mountain Park System (Scenic Drives)

The planning for the Scenic Mountain Drives was as important as the planning for the parks. Olmsted's recommendations in 1912 identified road design as the chief priority to be accomplished to provide "a system of first-class roads, giving the public convenient access to the best of the mountain scenery." These drives were carefully designed to provide excellent views, pull offs, and rest areas with gentle slopes and adequate widths to ensure driver comfort. Few roads existed in this mountain region in 1912 and many of those were narrow, winding, dirt lanes. The scenic drives sometimes utilized old alignments for the new roads, but others were built where there had been no roads before.

Olmstead recommended the following criteria in locating and designing the system:

Provide at least two approaches from Denver using existing road to Golden (Colfax) and the ridges which run west and south from that vicinity to Lookout Mountain.

The beauty of the scenery should be exhibited by the road.

Engineering excellence and economy should be considered in the road design.

The land purchased should be adequate for roadways and safeguard the scenery along the edges.

Road boundaries need not always be uniform on both sides, but should be based on protecting scenic views.

Secure sufficient lands for rest and picnic areas.

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Denver Mountain Parks (Scenic Drives)

Proper road alignment was so critical that certain sections were taken by eminent domain to provide a contiguous workable system. Overall, Olmsted's recommendations were followed for the construction of the scenic drives and still function to connect the mountain parks.

The Mountain Parks Commission established a special road subcommittee to work with the National Forest Service, the State of Colorado, Jefferson County, and private land owners to gain road easements and share in the cost for design and construction of the scenic mountain drives.

When the first parks, Genesee and Lookout Mountain, were purchased in 1912 and 1913, both needed better road access. The Mountain Parks Commission began by funding the Lariat Trail which became the northern entry to the park system. This scenic drive, up Lookout Mountain, conceived by Olmstead and finalized and surveyed by S.R. DeBoer, afforded views of Denver, Golden, Clear Creek, and the vast expanse of eastern plains. The road design was twenty feet wide, had a maximum grade of six percent with no curve less than a fifty foot radius and an alignment which offered the best views. These specifications were followed in the construction of the later scenic drives.

The Commission wanted Lariat Trail designed with gentle slopes, a wide road bed and gentle curves. They also insisted on having pull offs and rest areas so people could enjoy the views. Due to the steep slopes and elevation gain this scenic drive is an engineering design feat which switches back and forth across the face of Lookout Mountain until the top is gained. The road has been little altered except for paving and widening on the dangerous switchbacks and hairpin curves. For safety, stone guardrails were installed along the steep drop-offs on the road edge. These were installed leaving spaces between for viewing and drainage. Many of these were damaged through the years and have been replaced with the more standard metal guardrails.

The entrance to the Lariat Trail is still marked by the large stone gateway constructed in 1917 at the beginning of the climb up the mountain just outside Golden. Other gateways, now demolished, were installed at Morrison when the southern end of this circle loop was completed.

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Denver Mountain Park System (Scenic Drives)

The Lariat Trail was only the beginning of Denver's extensive Scenic Mountain Drive system. In 1914, the Parks Commission, in conjunction with Jefferson County and the State Highway Department, funded the construction of road improvements along Morrison Road. This established the southern entry to the park system. In 1914, the Denver Post wrote "...these new roads are among the best automobile roads in the country and before the year is over the greatest part of the grandest scenic drives in the United States will be complete."

When the north and south entries to the park system were completed, work began on the first "circle loop drive." This connected Morrison to Golden by a drive through the mountains. In 1915 the loop was completed and dedicated as the main link in the mountain parks system. This loop involved the upgrading of several existing state and county roads as well as new construction and connected the earliest mountain parks into a contiguous system.

By 1918, users could drive the first circle loop from Denver along a concrete road to Golden, then begin the Lariat Trail up to Lookout Mountain Park, loop around to Genesee, Fillius, and Bergen parks. Bergen Park was a juncture where several roads came together and marked the middle of the circle loop. Here drivers turned south on what is now Highway 74 to drive through the beautiful Elk Meadows area until entering the Bear Creek Valley at the town of Evergreen. The road then continued along the banks of Bear Creek through steep enclosing granite canyons. People could stop along the route to picnic or fish in Pence and Little parks. Bear Creek Canyon Drive led into Morrison and Red Rocks Park. From there it was an easy drive back to Denver along Morrison Road or Alameda Parkway. This circle loop was so successful there were 116,292 cars passing through the Mountain Parks gateways in 1918.

By 1918, construction also began on the Squaw Pass Road from Bergen Park to Echo Lake Park and which would ultimately connect with the road to the top of Mt. Evans, one of the highest mountain roads in the United States. Squaw Pass Road took many years to complete due to the problems caused by severe climatic conditions, steep mountainous topography and labor shortages. The completion of Chicago Creek Drive from Idaho Springs to Echo Lake Park in the 1930s created another loop in the circle.

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Denver Mountain Park System (Scenic Drives)

By 1920, the original circle loop drive was heavily congested on weekends and holidays. To relieve this situation new scenic drives were constructed along Cub and Deer creeks to divert traffic out of Bear Creek Canyon along new drives leading to Turkey Creek Canyon Drive (Now Highway 285).

By the mid-1930s there were eight different circle loop drives from Denver which connected a variety of mountain parks. These drives reached from the plains to the alpine tundra and provided scenery ranging from views across the Colorado plains to rushing mountain streams. The roads moved through the steep enclosed canyons of Bear Creek or on the more gentle shrub and tree covered slopes of Turkey Creek. The roads climbed from a little over 5,000 feet in Denver to over 12,000 feet at Summit Lake Park at the foot of Mt. Evans while passing through some of the most diverse ecosystems in the nation.

Not only did the scenic drives climb up mountains, but they also wound their way along canyons such as the early Bear Creek Canyon drive. Portions of this scenic drive were improved between 1935 and 1941 by the CCC to remove the roadway out of the dangerous floodplain. The CCC built large stone retaining walls which rose to twenty feet above the river in some areas and relocated the road well above the creek danger. Construction of the walls was difficult due to the roaring waters of Bear Creek and the steep granite cliffs on either side. These walls are still in excellent condition today.

Throughout the early Scenic Drive system stone guardrails and pylons with heavy metal cables lined the dangerous portions of the roadways. Most of these have now been replaced with metal guardrails due to deterioration and current highway safety regulations. The old original wood and later concrete bridges have all been replaced. The original scenic drives were surfaced with gravel, but all of the heavily used roads are now paved with asphalt. Most of the roads are in their original locations and are still two lane, but most have been widened.

Because of the various jurisdictions through which the scenic drives pass, there have been different kinds of maintenance and improvements. Those drives that have become main highways have been altered the most. While old Highway 40 which was the main route into the mountains and passed through Genesee Park, still exists as a frontage road, it has been replaced by I-70, a six lane superhighway which also passes through the park. However, the presence of I-70 does little to diminish the natural and scenic resources and beauty of that park. The road

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Denver Mountain Park System (Scenic Drives)
leading from Bergen Park has been widened into a four lane highway to accommodate the growing number of residents of Evergreen. The few internal park roads have been even less altered, remain unpaved and retain their original integrity.

The areas that have numbers of new buildings are on Lookout Mountain, the lands east of Genesee Park, at the north side of Highway 74 at Bergen Park and the outskirts of Evergreen. The views, unique land forms and natural vegetation along the roadways remain virtually unchanged for the most part throughout the scenic drive system. All of the Scenic Mountain Drives still exist and it is still possible to drive the whole system much as it was originally envisioned by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.

III. SIGNIFICANCE

The Scenic Drives are significant because they linked all of the mountain parks and made the Denver Mountain Park System possible. Scenic Mountain Drives may be eligible under criterion A because they are associated with the City Beautiful movement in Denver and are an extension of the Denver Park and Parkway system using the same concepts and extending them into the Rocky Mountains.

Early in the 20th century parkways were being designed throughout many parts of the nation as part of the City Beautiful movement. Denver began construction on its Park and Parkways System ca. 1904 and in 1912 began to extend those ideas into the mountains west of the city.

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The Scenic Mountain Drives also may be eligible under criterion C for their design and engineering significance as well as their association with landscape designers Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and Saco Reink DeBoer, who provided the initial concepts of location, design standards and preservation of natural settings.

All the scenic mountain drives had high standards including gentle slopes and curves, adequate widths, and safe surfacing, yet they were constructed in areas with sheer cliffs, through pure granite where climatic conditions, at times, consisted of tremendous winds with snowfall occurring during all seasons. The Scenic Mountain Drives embody the distinctive characteristics of other parkway systems yet the final design and method of construction had to meet very exacting minimum design standards. To provide for a maximum of six percent slopes, twenty foot road width, and no curves greater than fifty feet, Denver had to carefully design the system. This was well exemplified in the design and construction of the Lariat Trail. The road was designed to take maximum advantage of views, yet minimize disturbance to the natural environment. The entire drive system, up steep mountain slopes; through gentle mountain valleys, deep canyons, or tundra landscapes all had the same design considerations to ensure a scenic system was created throughout the Denver Mountain Parks.

IV. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Denver Mountain Parks Scenic Drives

The scenic Drives of the Denver Mountain Parks System are eligible for listing in the National Register if they were constructed between 1912 and 1940 and if they were constructed as part of Olmsted's original mountain parks plan or were constructed later on the recommendation of the Mountain Parks Commission as extensions of the Denver Mountain Parks System. The drives must still contain the characteristics of their original design intent in terms of widths (2 lanes), location, curves and grades and they must still provide the same or similar access to the mountain parks. The natural setting along the roadways must be similar to what was there at the time of original construction. The scenic vistas should be fairly intact with no major intrusions such as shopping centers or housing developments along the road corridors. Historic alterations, such as the relocation of Bear Creek Drive by the CCC to avoid flooding are acceptable. Evaluation of road integrity should recognize changes to the manmade features along the drives, such as replacing stone guardrails and wooden and concrete

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

Initiation

The project was initiated by the Denver Landmark Preservation Commission a Certified Local Government and implemented by a historic preservation fund grant from the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (OAHP) at the Colorado Historical Society. The Denver Parks and Recreation Department also played an important role in the initiation and formulation of the project.

This Denver Mountain Parks System Multiple Property Submission is an obvious next step to the previously listed Denver Park and Parkways. Several individuals assisted in the development of this nomination. Don Etter, Co-Director of the City of Denver Park and Recreation Department, Barbara Norgren, National Register Coordinator for the Colorado Historical Society, and

(X) See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

Books

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(x) See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> State historic preservation office | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other State agency | <input type="checkbox"/> University |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Federal agency | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Specify repository: Denver Parks and Recreation Department, Mountain Parks Office, Denver Public Library, 3rd floor History

11. Form Prepared By

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Mary Roberts, the Historic Preservation Planner from the Denver Planning Department, in conjunction with the Colorado State Historical Society (OAHF), chose a multi-disciplinary team of consultants to develop this nomination. The lead consulting firm was Shapins/Moss, Inc. who are planners and landscape architects with experience in historic park research, preservation and planning. Ann Moss was project manager with Maureen Van Norden and Mark Easley as research assistants.

Front Range Research, an historic consulting firm, assisted Shapins/Moss throughout the project and provided general advice as well as editing and historic integrity research for all the major buildings within the nomination. Members of the team from Front Range Research included Laurie Simmons and Christine Whitacre.

Scope of the Project

A preliminary study of the entire Denver Mountain Park System was provided with nine specific parks and drives chosen for nomination. Due to monetary and time constraints, the entire system is not being included for nomination at this time but will be nominated at a later date. An overview of the entire Mountain Park System was developed so one could understand the entire system and how the chosen nominations are representative. Specific landscapes were chosen for this first nomination based upon the following criteria:

Chosen lands should represent typical parks or scenic drives within the entire Mountain Park System and should meet the registration requirements set forth in this document. Very large parks such as Genesee Park were chosen as well as small sites such as Colorow Point. Each has individual significance within the Mountain Parks System as well as different location, setting, purpose and design.

Nominated parks and scenic drives represent variations within the natural environment and illustrate the differences among specific mountain park and scenic drive environments. Sites represented exemplify the purpose and

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goals of Olmsted's Mountain Parks Plan and are representative of the historically implemented Mountain Parks System. The parks and scenic drives include prime visual points, mountain tops, unique landforms, gently sloping park meadows, mountain lakes and streams, and mountain canyons. The two property types, mountain parks and scenic mountain drives are clearly represented.

Chosen parcels for nomination are along the oldest historic circular loop drive in the Mountain Park System since this drive set the basis for the system which later expanded as dollars and access became available. The parks include excellent examples of Denver Mountain Parks architecture and many of the more significant structures such as the lodges, restaurants, museums, and CCC camp structures because of their historic association with the development of the system. They should exemplify the vast variety of recreational activities available in the Mountain Park System. The parks and scenic drives exhibit visual overlooks, picnic sites, campgrounds, mountain trails, golf courses, lakes, fishing streams, and such unique features as the outdoor amphitheater.

When additional mountain parks and scenic mountain drives are submitted for nomination there should be no lands which are significantly different than the representative sites shown in this nomination. It should be understood, however, that each of the sites is special and unique in its own way as well as an integral part of the overall Denver Mountain Park System.

Work Program

Shapins/Moss developed a detailed Work Program and succinct time line with specific work tasks given to each team member. The major work tasks included:

1. Overall Inventory and Analysis: The entire Denver Mountain Park System was inventoried in a preliminary manner. Historic and contemporary research was gathered including articles, photographs, brochures and newspaper

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clippings. Interviews with knowledgeable people were conducted. Interview data was backed up by articles. Whenever possible, the primary historic source, such as Municipal Facts and historic newspaper articles were used. The most representative parks and scenic mountain drives were visited. An analysis of the natural and cultural systems for the entire system was provided based on gathered data and site visits.

2. Site Selection of Parks and Drives: Once the entire system had been preliminarily inventoried and analyzed, the specific parcels were ready to be chosen. The initial inventory and analysis laid the basis for the site selection. If selection was done prematurely, the most representative parcels may not have been chosen. The parcels were first chosen by the consulting multi-disciplinary team. Then Barbara Norgren from the Colorado State Historical Society, Don Etter from the Denver Parks Department, and Ann Moss, the project manager, met and discussed the specific site selections. Changes were made based upon the additional state and city knowledge. These meetings, based on known historical data, resulted in the specific parcels included for nomination.

3. Site Specific Historic Research and Analysis: People on the team were given specific parcels to research. The historic research included detailed historic and contemporary data. Municipal Facts, Mountain Park Commission Historic Meeting Minutes, the Olmsted Plan, historic newspaper articles, maps, and other data generated during the time period became the main evidence for dates and data development. The historic appearance, including site planning and specific design, was provided by studying dated historic photographs, maps, and other relevant historic data.

A number of interviews were conducted. Data received from interviews were backed by historic research. Interviews were with individuals well informed about the Denver Mountain Park System during the period of significance. People interviewed include the present Co-Director of the Denver Parks and Recreation Department, the former manager of the Denver Mountain Park System, the former and current head of maintenance for the Denver Mountain Parks, representatives from the Colorado Chapter of the Civilian Conservation Corp Association, four people who lived in the Red Rocks CCC camp during the period of significance, and an historian and maintenance person who lives in Genesee Park.

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