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

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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historic name Sayre City Park

other names/site number

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2. Location

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street & number 200 yards south of intersection of E1200 Rd and N1870 Rd not for publication N/A
city or town Sayre vicinity N/A
state Oklahoma code OK county Beckham code 009 zip code 73662

NATIONAL REGISTER
LISTED

MAR 03 '04

SIGN HERE

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[illegible]/Federal Agency Certification

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

1-20-04

Signature of certifying official Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

_____ _____
Signature of commenting or other official Date

_____
State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ entered in the National Register _____ _____
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined eligible for the _____ _____
National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined not eligible for the _____ _____
National Register
____ removed from the National Register _____ _____
____ other (explain): _____

_____ _____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date
of Action

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5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

___ private
_x_ public-local
___ public-State
___ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

___ building(s)
___ district
_x_ site
___ structure
___ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	2	buildings
		sites
3	3	structures
		objects
5	5	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma

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6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: _RECREATION AND CULTURE_ Sub: __ outdoor recreation _____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: _RECREATION AND CULTURE_ Sub: __ outdoor recreation _____

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)
LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:
Pueblo Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
foundation CONCRETE
roof ASPHALT
walls *STONE: sandstone*

other

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

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8. Statement of Significance

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

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

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

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

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

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

____ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

____ B removed from its original location.

____ C a birthplace or a grave.

____ D a cemetery.

____ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

____ F a commemorative property.

____ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1940-1954

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8. Statement of Significance (Continued)

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Significant Dates 1940

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

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder J. N. Willis, Works Projects Administration

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

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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

Primary Location of Additional Data
_x_ State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
___ Other
Name of repository:

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property approximately 6 acres

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	14	441227E	3903556N	3	14	441425E	3903394N
2	14	441353E	3903556N	4	14	441225E	3903394N

N/A See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Michael Cassity, Ph.D.

organization Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office date December 9, 2003

street & number 304 W. Albuquerque telephone 918 451-8378

city or town Broken Arrow state OK zip code 74011

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Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:
Continuation Sheets
Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs
Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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Property Owner

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Sayre

street & number 102 West Main telephone 580 928-2260

city or town Sayre state OK zip code 73662

Description

Located approximately one mile south of the business district of Sayre, Oklahoma, the Sayre City Park is on the fringe of the city, in a semi-rural area that travelers on Route 66 passed by as they approached Sayre from the west or departed from the east. The park is on the east side of the highway that at one time formed a direct extension of Sayre's South Ninth Street. The park consists of an extensive area that has been partially developed with a golf course, rodeo grounds, baseball fields, and other recreational areas, but the original portion is considerably smaller and includes only the clearly defined features within about 750 feet of the highway, an area that includes the miniature golf facility, the playground, a pavilion, the swimming pool and bath house, the pump house, a large gazebo, tennis courts, and camping facilities, as well as numerous small features such as fire pits, picnic tables, and trails.

The main entrance to the park is south of a rock wall where an asphalt drive turns off the old highway to the east. That drive provides the south border of the core of the park—the nominated historic site—as it moves to the east and then loops around to the north, returning to a point near the entrance where it forms a lopsided figure 8, the large east loop containing the swimming pool and other features, and the smaller loop on the west, near the rock wall and highway, containing the miniature golf course and playground.

Although the history of the park predates most of the features, its original use appears to have been informal and used as an open, public space for recreation and camping rather than as an organized facility. The significant structures in the park date from a Works Projects Administration undertaking that was completed in 1940. These include the graceful and eminent bathhouse next to the swimming pool, a large gazebo, and a pump house to match the red stone in the others, and also a long rock wall bordering the highway.

The park is on a generally flat terrain that has scattered deciduous trees of varying sizes and ages. Sayre City Park includes a variety of minor resources, like park benches, tables and firepits, that clearly and obviously date from the period of historic significance (such as park tables and benches that use the same materials and construction methods as the larger features in the park). While not counted individually they contribute to the property's historic significance. Other features that are portable, including some tables and refuse receptacles, are also scattered in the area and are noncontributing.

Bathhouse and Swimming Pool

Clearly the centerpiece of the park, the swimming pool and bathhouse are located near the entrance to the park, which is to say also near the highway, separated from the highway by the rock wall and the miniature golf course. The bathhouse and pool were constructed in 1940 as a WPA project and represented the major design element of the

park as it transformed from open public space to organized recreation area. The building is constructed in the Pueblo Revival style, with its flat roof, vigas, and rough hewn wood windows. It does, on the one hand, exhibit elements of the Romanesque style with rough-faced stone, arched entrance, and tower. It is best classified, though, as Pueblo Revival. The building is made of rich, red native stone, but random stones have been painted white for accent.

The bathhouse faces west toward the highway and that elevation includes a central, dominating arch entrance, flanked by high windows; a round tower rises at the northwest corner of the building. The arch is the centerpiece of the elevation, both literally and figuratively, and it immediately commands attention because of its careful masonry, because it springs from the floor, and because it has been highlighted with white paint. The keystone holds a shield medallion indicating the WPA origin of the building. The arch forms an open passage into an entryway that channels swimmers to either the left or right for the men's or women's dressing rooms. The interior of that vestibule is the same stone, again painted white. On either side of the arch, horizontal windows are divided into two sections with wood surrounds, and are barred horizontally with rough-hewn wood positioned horizontally. It is important to note that the ashlar, a native red sandstone, is laid in broken rangework and the rustication is noticeable where the face contrasts with the dressed corners. The coping lining the straight parapet is painted white and supports a metal rail that surrounds the deck on the roof of the structure. Beneath the coping on the west elevation a row of a dozen vigas projects outward, pueblo style; their ends have been painted white. The tower at the north end of the elevation is round with a conical roof. There is an entrance into the base of the tower on the south curve, near the main building, but more noticeable is the outdoor stairway that winds up and around the tower onto the deck. The handrail, of the same stone and white coping, gracefully winds with the stairs. On the upper level of the tower, a narrow window is behind wooden louvers on the west, and a doorway is on the east, opening onto the deck.

As the handrail winds around to the north elevation, it merges into the parapet that surrounds the deck on the roof of the bathhouse. Beneath it, the north elevation includes a single window, in this case a vertical opening with horizontal rough-hewn wooden bars. A metal utility container obscures part of the view of this elevation. Except for the random blocks painted white, the east elevation is perfectly symmetrical with three doorways leading from the changing rooms and service area onto the concrete apron surrounding the pool. These doors are flanked by similar horizontal windows with wooden bars. The south elevation is of the same masonry as the others, again with random blocks painted white, and with a single horizontal window with rough-hewn wooden bars.

The swimming pool is located immediately east of the bathhouse and is a rectangular concrete structure, deeper at the south end where diving boards are strategically placed. Ladders and lifeguard posts are located around the pool. Modern pool circulation, water treatment, and filtration equipment is located on a concrete slab south of the pool, completely enclosed by chain link fence, and is noncontributing.

A chain link fence surrounds the pool and bathhouse complex, but it appears the fence was added in later years and while the bathhouse and pool are both contributing features, the fence is not.

Pump House

Located south of the pool, the pump house is a square building of the same stone material as the bathhouse. Even on this humble utility structure, the dressing of the ashlar demonstrates careful craftsmanship and this building is an important feature of the park, both functionally for housing the chemical and pumping apparatus, and architecturally. A simple wooden plank door is on the east elevation, but there are no other features on the other elevations. The roof is flat with a plain white cornice wrapping around the top of the building. A chain link fence surrounding a concrete pad on the east of the pump house is noncontributing, but the pump house is a contributing feature.

Modern Restrooms

South of the pump house, a large brick building containing restroom facilities, with pitched gable roof with overhanging eaves has been added since the period of historic significance and is therefore noncontributing.

Tennis Courts

Modern tennis courts are located east and slightly south of the pool. These are regulation size courts, added to the park since the period of historic significance. Despite their substantial size, they are located on the periphery of the cluster of historic features and are unobtrusive.

Gazebo

A large octagonal gazebo is located straight east of the pool. This structure, constructed in 1940 as part of the WPA project, is made of the same red sandstone as the bathhouse and consists of a low rock wall with pilasters at each of the eight corners from which metal supports rise to provide a frame for the octagonal-cone roof with asphalt shingles. The gazebo has a concrete floor at a level about a foot above the surrounding terrace and visitors enter the structure through an opening in the rock wall on the east elevation. That entrance includes two sandstone steps on the outside. A center post in the middle of the gazebo rises from the floor to provide additional support for the roof. The gazebo is a contributing feature.

Pavilion

North and east of the swimming pool / bathhouse is an open-air pavilion of modern construction. Built with steel piers supporting a low-pitched metal roof on an east-west axis with a wall at the west end, this is a noncontributing feature.

Miniature Golf Course

The 18-hole miniature golf course is located west of the bathhouse, but separated from it by a paved drive, and east of the rock wall lining bordering the park near the highway. A chain link fence surrounds the course. This miniature golf course is not like many of its counterparts elsewhere in that it retains a simple profile without the technologically and commercially contrived obstacles like revolving windmill blades and rotating statuary that emerged in the period after 1955. Aside from the curbed putting surfaces, which have changed over the years, the two conspicuous built features of the course are an octagonal service building located on the east central perimeter of the course, and a circular raised garden area on one of the links. These features echo other contributing buildings in the park, namely the tower on the bathhouse and the gazebo, but have clearly been added in recent years, are built of different materials than the other historic features, and are noncontributing.

Playground

The playground is located directly north of the miniature golf course, just east of the stone wall. It primarily consists of modern brightly colored steel and synthetic playground equipment. It is noncontributing.

Stone wall

In addition, the wall includes pilasters on its east elevation for additional support in its retaining function. Using the same broken rangework found in the other WPA buildings, the stone wall also utilizes some stone that is lighter in color, some which contains a band of red and a band of gray. The stone is not painted (or the paint has weathered away) and the wall maintains a beautiful texture and varied coloration. An attractive, durable, and impressive part of Sayre City Park, the stone wall is a contributing feature.

Summary

The gazebo, the bath house, the swimming pool, the pump house, and the stone wall are all contributing features and retain integrity of structure, materials, workmanship, location, appearance, feeling, The first feature that the visitor to the park sees, and one by which every motorist on Route 66 passed when using this part of the highway, is the long red sandstone wall that serves as both a retaining wall and a barrier on the west side of the park near the roadway. With a length of just over 500 feet, the stone wall used an enormous amount of dressed rock in its construction. The height of the wall varies with the slope of the land, reaching a height of around twelve feet on its lower (east) side at the south end. (This also provides firm evidence of the landscaping of the park at the time of its construction since this wall marks the level park grounds to its east.) On the west side, near the roadway, the wall ranges between around four feet in height. The wall is crowned by a course of stone that is cut slightly larger than the rock used below so that the crown has a slight overhang to it. (Some of the rocks in this crown course are missing.) The height drops gradually to the north, and this crown drops down one course in each instance. and association.

Significance

Summary

The Sayre City Park is significant within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma." Although a park had existed informally at this location in the 1930s, in 1940 the Works Projects Administration constructed the major facilities, including the landscaping for this park along the east side of Route 66 just south of Sayre, Oklahoma. Because of its location, and because of the attractiveness of parks for travelers to rest and even spend the night as they crossed the state and nation on this important highway, the park is an important associated property in considering Route 66. Because of this association with Route 66, the park qualifies under that multiple property nomination under Criterion A and represents the property type, "Roadside Parks / Markers" in the area of significance of Entertainment / Recreation. Moreover, because the property also is significant for its architectural qualities and associations as specified under that multiple property nomination, it also meets the requirements of Criterion C.

Historical Significance

Located in lands that had once been reserved for tribes of Native Americans being relocated to Indian Territory, the founding of the town of Sayre in 1901 marked both the beginning of the twentieth century and the emergence of a commercial center in the western part of the state. The town took root at the juncture of the North Fork of the Red River, which in fact had served as a disputed boundary between Oklahoma and Texas until as recently as five years earlier, and the Choctaw Oklahoma and Gulf Railroad. And shortly after Oklahoma became a state in 1907, Sayre became the seat of Beckham County. The town served primarily the agricultural economy of the area, but within a decade Sayre was showing signs of broader commercial importance as the frame buildings in the business district were replaced with brick, and soon the streets in the heart of town were paved.[1] The town continued to grow and prospered during World War I.

At about that time Sayre developed its first city park. The origins of that park are obscure, but the land on which it spread out had become the property of the city as early as 1909 when the city purchased a quarter section of land from Benjamin and Phoebe Waters.[2] Ultimately the park that emerged on this land had substantial developments

[1] Cynthia Savage, National Register of Historic Places nomination, "Sayre Downtown Historic District," 31.

[2] Warranty Deed, Town of Sayre from Benjamin Waters and Phoebe Waters, March 30, 1909, Book 8, page 552, Beckham County Clerk Office property records.

including "a spring fed lake, bath houses, boat house, shoot-the-shoot slide for bathers, picnic tables and fishing."[3] That park, however was washed away in 1923 when the North Fork of the Red River flooded. The same flood washed away the bridge over the river, which at that time crossed on Fifth Street as it extended south. The new bridge that replaced what had been known as "the Wagon Bridge" crossed on Ninth, so future traffic south out of Sayre went down Ninth and along the western border of what was also known as the City Farm.

That road became something of more than casual importance to the community because it would become Route 66. As the town prospered following the 1923 discovery of oil in the surrounding area, the business community began to press for more, and better, roads. The new Chamber of Commerce wanted more paved roads and the Ozark Trails Association also organized locally. Receiving the support of the Sayre Chamber, the group actively pushed for the connection of Sayre to other communities with the Ozark Trails network of roads.[4] Although the Ozark Trails system had not initially included Sayre, its preferred route passing to the south through Mangum, it appears that the association took an active role and that the city by the mid-1920s became a part of the western portion of the Ozark Trails road map. At any rate, another highway, the Postal Highway, another private organization-sponsored road, did connect Sayre with other communities on a generally east-west route between Oklahoma City and Amarillo. This highway soon became Oklahoma Highway 3. Thus in November 1926 when the U.S. government officially designated Route 66, the highway used existing roads for the route instead of launching a survey of where the road should go, including Highway 3, the Postal Road. And with the stroke of a pen, Sayre found itself on Route 66.

Route 66 entered Sayre from the east (as conventionally visualized, although the road clearly went just as well from west to east) on the north end of town and literally followed Fourth Street to the south, passing by a few filling stations and the high school and descending the hill into the business district of town. When it reached Main Street, an east-west avenue, the highway alignment turned right, to the west, and followed Main for five blocks to Ninth Street, at which point the highway turned south the cross the new bridge spanning the North Fork of the Red River then located on Ninth.[5] Thus the road went along the western boundary of the City Farm—the location of the former city park and

[3] Carlton C. Cornels, *And That's the Way Sayre Was* (Sayre, Oklahoma: privately published). Mr. Cornels carefully describes the park as on the west side of the road and the modern park is clearly on the east side of the road; subsequently, of course, the road shifted west from Fifth to Ninth when the new bridge was constructed, which would place it in the same general location as the current City Park.

[4] "Chamber of Commerce," in Mrs. J. Danner, ed., *Sayre of Red River Valley* (Elk City, Oklahoma: McDonald's Printing, 1976).

[5] See, for the particulars of the routing of the various alignments of Route 66, Kathy Anderson, Jim Ross, and Gary Ray Howell, Oklahoma Route 66 Association, *Oklahoma Route 66 Roadbed Documentation Project (1926-1970): A Survey of Roadbed and Integral Structures* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma SHPO, 2002), Map 58.

an area that evidently many looked to still as something of a park. Still an unpaved road, the hopes were for paving the highway, and the state, just weeks before Route 66 came into being in November 1926, embarked upon a project to widen the road and the city of Sayre granted the state a right of way amounting to forty feet on the east side of what would be the center line of the paved road under Federal Aid Project 213.[6] That project, which followed Ninth Street south, however, would not be contracted for at least two more years. By 1930 a short distance of about five miles westbound from Sayre on Route 66 were paved, one of the earliest paved sections in the western part of the state.[7]

This road gave new access to the area by the park. As it followed Ninth Street south, it followed the west boundary of an area known at the time as the City Farm, but which also doubled as a city park. People were using the area for recreation, and one of the common uses for public land anywhere along Route 66 was for travelers to pull over and pitch a tent or roll out their sleeping bags. The proximity of a paved Route 66 appears to have given an impetus to the city to redevelop the park. In 1932 the city discussed refilling Duck Lake (which had been removed by the earlier flood) and also appointed an official Park Board.[8] In fact there were a number of occasions during the 1930s when the city park became the subject of speculation, and it appears that the area was being put to increased use as a park, although it was without official development. By 1938, however, plans had been formulated for actual construction and that autumn the community approved a bond issue that would generate funds for building both a library and improving the park system.[9] Construction began the next spring to follow the plan developed by J. N. Willis of Granite, Oklahoma. Of course, the city had an important partner in this project as the Works Progress Administration (which in 1939 was renamed the Work Projects Administration) provided funds and employed workers for the landscaping and construction. (The federal programs required financial participation of the cities who applied for WPA grants, thus the bond issue.) There may have been other partners as well. The project required a vast quantity of sandstone which was quarried south of Doxey, north and east of Sayre. In September 1939, the city, which was the official sponsoring agent in partnership with the federal government, noted in its accounts that the largest claim on the Park Fund was from the Oklahoma State Reformatory for stone. The work went on and finally in 1940 the park was complete and opened with fanfare.

[6] Easement for Right of Way from City of Sayre to State of Oklahoma, November 9, 1926.

[7] Report of the State Highway commission for the Years 1927 to 1928 inclusive (Oklahoma City: State of Oklahoma, 1928), 75; Report of the State Highway Commission for the years 1929 to 1930 inclusive (Oklahoma City: State of Oklahoma, 1930), 166.

[8] City of Sayre, City Council Minutes, April 4, 1932, May 2, 1932, City Hall, Sayre.

[9] City of Sayre, City Council Minutes, December 6, 1938, City Hall, Sayre; Sayre *Sun* October 13, 1938.

In the coming years, the City Park was put to good use by the community, but it had a larger function, for its location right beside Route 66 assured it the attention of passing motorists. During the 1930s Route 66 had become one of the most important, and probably the best known, highway in the nation, and in the coming decade and a half through the period of significance, Route 66 continued to grow in importance. Especially after World War II when people took to the roads in unprecedented numbers, Route 66 became the road of choice for millions of Americans. In 1946, Jack Rittenhouse wrote a guide for motorists using the highway, informing them of attractions and hazards along the road. The Sayre City Park was one of the attractions he noted: "As you leave Sayre you cross a concrete bridge a half-mile long over the north fork of the Red River, and later pass the city park (L) with its playground, stone tables, and fireplaces . . ."[10] How many passed by this park, of course, is unknown, but it is clear that the Sayre City Park provided many of them a convenient place to stop and rest and even spend the night. A tradition of camping at some point became institutionalized and the state soon helped sponsor the creation of an official campground south of the recreational facilities already at the park. As Carlton Cornels, a professional journalist who has both lived and studied the history of Sayre recalls, "Like a beacon, the bath house lured tourists from the highway to the swimming pool. Some of them celebrities such as movie star, Robert Mitchum."[11] In a time when both motels and automobiles lacked air conditioning that statement indicates not just how refreshing the pool must have been for travelers, but also bears a reminder of what travel was like.

There was another consequence of the park's presence on Route 66. Across from the park and nearby up and down Route 66 from the park a variety of businesses emerged. Some of the shells of those business still remain. Mr. Cornels describes some of those businesses located nearby, "only a few yards from the park." Immediately to the south, at what became known as Dorsey's Y, where Route 66 veered off to the west, Joe Dorsey's Y Café and service operated and nearby the Castle Bar Ball Room and Tourist Court. Plus, there was another attraction: "Up the river from Sayre Park was the Refinery Cock Pit; possibly the worst kept secret of any clandestine operation in Beckham County." During the 1930s, this illicit establishment was so noisy, reports are, "you could hear the Refinery Cock Pit before you reached it, when the chickens were fighting." Sayre City Park had become the hub of a range of activities, some legal and some not, by virtue of its presence on Route 66.

The vast numbers of people crowding onto Route 66 ultimately proved to be its demise, however, as it created an increasing need for wider roads, straighter roads, and roads with fewer of the forays through business districts that made the highways attractive to the merchants. By the mid-fifties a variety of forces were at work to reshape the highway alignment of Route 66. One pressure that may not have been anticipated was the North Fork of the Red

[10] Jack D. Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66* (Los Angeles: J. D. Rittenhouse, 1946; reprinted by University of New Mexico Press, 1988), 60.

[11] Cornels, *That's the Way Sayre Was*.

River. The river had flooded in 1923 and taken out the Fifth Street bridge; the result had been a shift in road alignment so that the new road followed Ninth Street to the South, along what would be the new park. In 1957 the river flooded again, and took out the Ninth Street bridge. When it was rebuilt, it was built on Fourth Street, and in 1958 Route 66 passed to the east of the Sayre City Park. It was now a four-lane road, its passengers had less time for stops at parks and pools, and the road now missed completely the elegant red sandstone wall and the other WPA buildings that had beckoned to them in previous years. In a few more years, in fact, the new Interstate 40 would be open, completely bypassing not only Sayre City Park, but Sayre too. In fact, the new roads were leaving behind, in one way or another, much of the Main Street of America that Route 66 was designed to serve.

Summary

Sayre City Park came into being in large part as a result of its location along Route 66 and once the buildings were constructed in 1939 and 1940, it served the travelers on that road "like a beacon," and it thereby served a close relationship to the important highway. In that way, the park qualifies for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as a representative of the property type "Roadside Parks / Markers" in the area of significance of Entertainment / Recreation," within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma" under Criterion A.

Architectural Significance

The Sayre City Park is also significant because its buildings represent a distinct period and type of construction.

The bathhouse, the pump house associated with the swimming pool, the gazebo, and the rock wall are all important contributions of WPA construction in the park. Built in 1939 and 1940 as part of a project designed both to provide important facilities for the community and to put people to work who needed employment, the result was an enduring and attractive accomplishment for which the community was deservedly proud. The architectural qualities of these buildings immediately identify them as products of that effort, and the convergence of the iconic structures of WPA with the iconic highway that crossed the nation marks a distinct moment in history. The survey of WPA construction in this region of Oklahoma has identified some of these Sayre City Park structures for their possible significance.[12] It also defined the qualities of such resources including their general usefulness and community sponsorship, their employment base (at least 90% of the workers had to come from employable persons on the relief rolls). They also

[12] W. David Baird, *Final Report: WPA Structures Thematic Survey (Phase III)*, Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, August 30, 1987.

drew upon local building materials, a way in which sponsors could contribute a portion of the construction costs; when native stone was available nearby, this was often used. They WPA projects were also characterized by careful workmanship, quality that was aided by the labor-intensive tasks and the fact that "given depressed economic conditions, the WPA program was less concerned with productivity than with 'useful' employment. This translated into time, time for the workers to do their construction jobs right—to make the rock fit perfectly and bricks run smoothly or to tear down a wall that was not plumb and to build it again. With some exceptions, therefore, WPA workmanship in the central, southwestern, and panhandle counties was of remarkable quality."[13]

Even without reading the shield medallion affixed to the keystone in the arch entry to the bathhouse indicating that this was a WPA project, it is clear that these buildings fit exactly. The Sayre City Park obviously met these requirements as conditions for being built. The buildings tended to the vernacular although they sometimes "referred to Richardsonian Romanesque themes with rough cut stone, smaller window openings and arch entryways."[14] That category obviously includes the WPA buildings at Sayre City Park. In one sense, however, these buildings diverge from the pattern of WPA buildings in Oklahoma. Baird notes that the buildings that drew upon earlier styles, like the Richardsonian Romanesque, tended to be in the area "bordering the forest cover in the eastern one-half of the state." Yet, here in Sayre is exactly such a set of buildings. But as one looks closely at the Sayre City Park buildings, it becomes clear that there is a second style reflected in the construction. The flat roof, the vigas projecting out from beneath the roofline of the bathhouse, and the rough hewn wood in the windows, are all reminiscent of New Mexico pueblos. Yet they too are in the same project, even in the same building. The marriage of Richardsonian Romanesque with Pueblo Revival may be an odd mix by some lights, but in this community of western Oklahoma, rising high toward the Staked Plains, the architecture itself represents a transition between East and West, between forest and plain, between urban and rural.

These buildings in the Sayre City Park thus represent a distinctive type of architecture, from a distinct period, and qualify under Criterion C in the area of significance Architecture, as part of the multiple property nomination, "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma."

[13] Baird, *Final Report: WPA Structures Thematic Survey*, 16.

[14] Baird, *Final Report: WPA Structures Thematic Survey*, 13.

Summary

Putting both of these areas of significance and criteria together, Sayre City Park qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places within the multiple property nomination, "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma" under Criterion A in the area of significance Entertainment / Recreation and under Criterion C in the area of significance Architecture, as a member of the property type Roadside Parks / Markers.

Major Bibliographical References

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Verbal Boundary Description

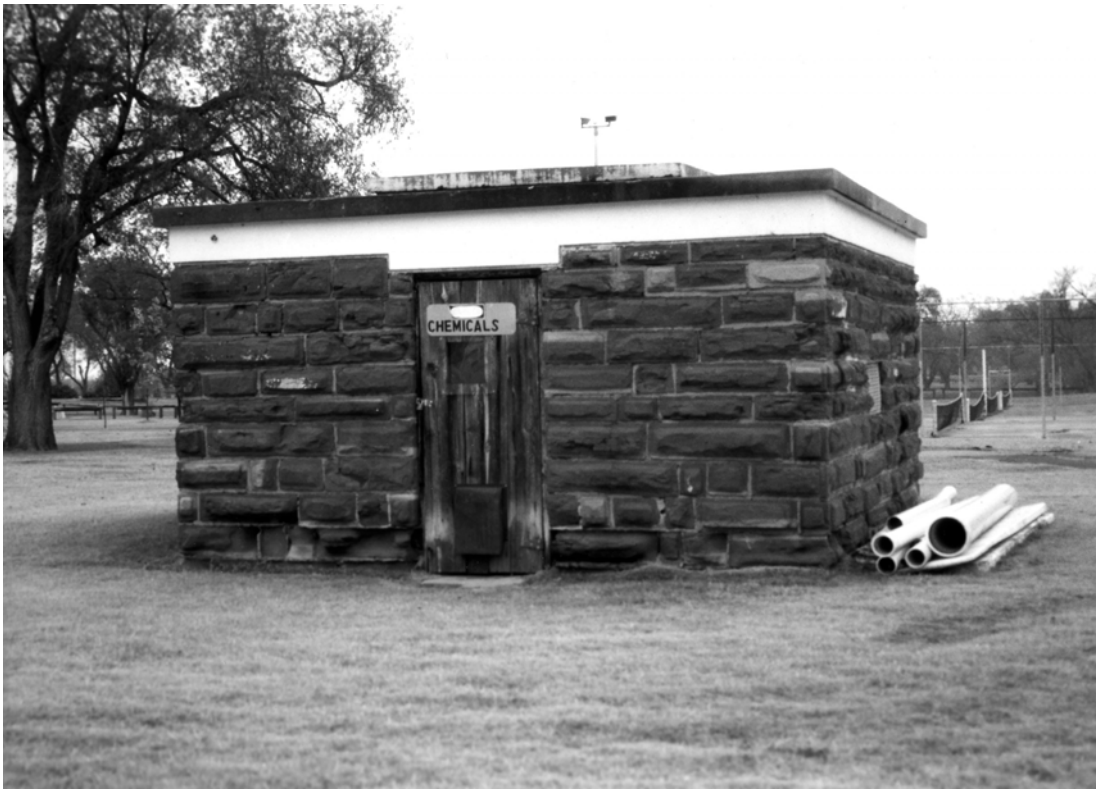
This property is a polygon that includes the area east of the rock wall adjacent to Old U.S. Route 66 for a distance of 420 feet from the north end of the rock wall and a distance of 660 feet from the south end of the rock wall in the NW ¼, NW ¼, of Section 9, Township 9, Range 23

Boundary Justification

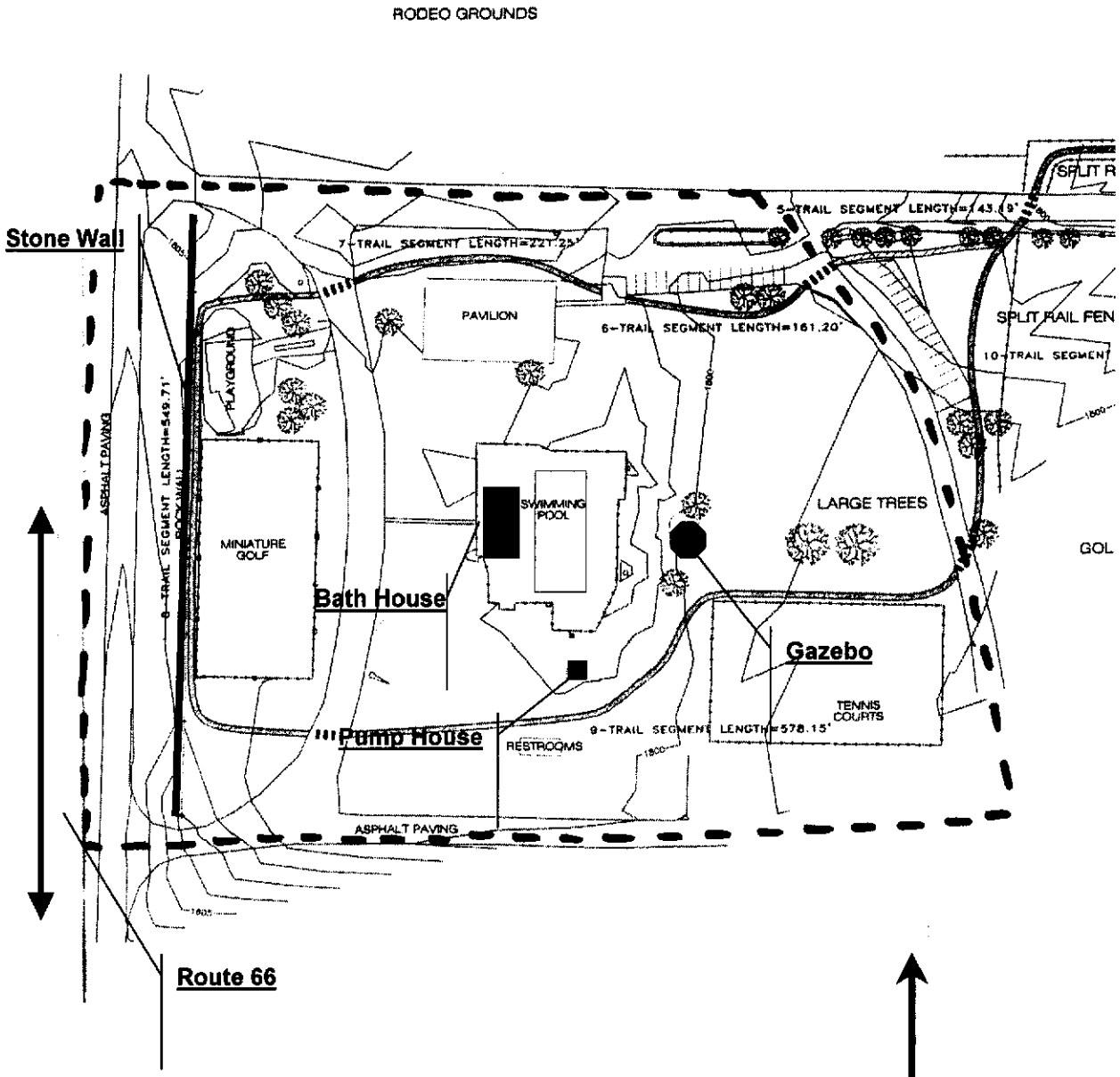
This boundary includes the property historically associated with the Sayre City Park.

Sayre City Park & Campground

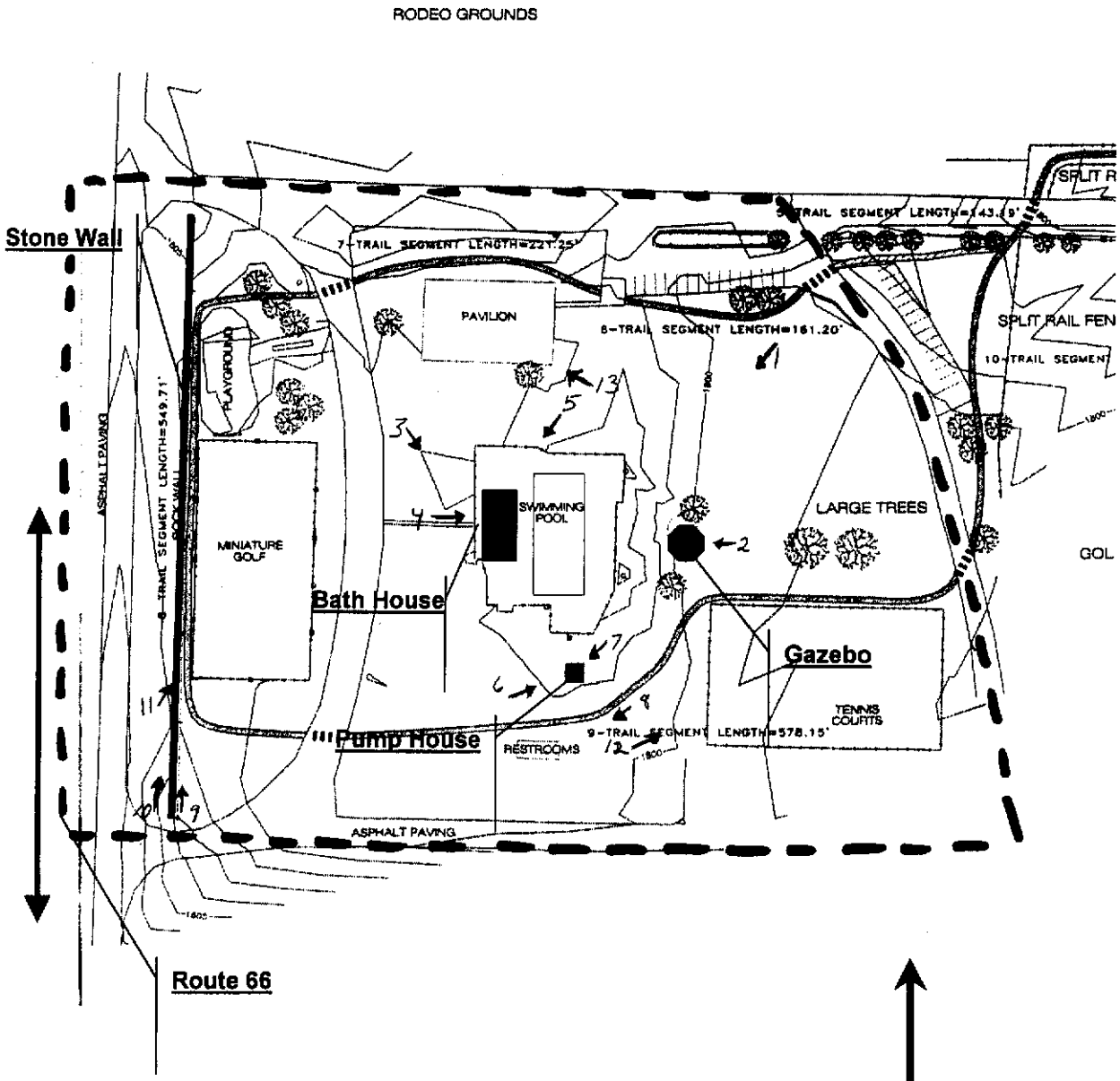
Sayre City Park & Campground



Sayre City Park & Campground



Sayre City Park
Beckham County, Oklahoma



Sayre City Park
Beckham County, Oklahoma

Photograph Sketch Map