NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER
LISTED

APR 16 2008

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name North Riverside Park Comfort Station

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 900 N. Bitting Avenue [N/A] not for publication

city or town Wichita [N/A] vicinity

state Kansas code KS county Sedgwick code 173 zip code 67203

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Patrick Zeller DSHPO State Historic Preservation Officer 2/29/08

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is: Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

- ☐ 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
  - ☐ See continuation sheet.
- ☐ other, explain
  - ☐ See continuation sheet.

North Riverside Park Comfort Station
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
County/State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

[ ] private
[X] public-local
[ ] public-State
[ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

[X] building(s)
[ ] district
[ ] site
[ ] structure
[ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

New Deal-era Resources of Kansas

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE/outdoor recreation

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE/outdoor recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK
roof SYNTHETIC
other CONCRETE

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

8. Statement of Significance

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

[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.)

Property is:

[ ] **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

[ ] **B** removed from its original location.

[ ] **C** a birthplace or 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.

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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY
ARCHITECTURE

Periods of Significance
1934

Significant Dates
N/A

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

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
L.W. Clapp/CWA

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

#_____

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

#_____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State Agency
☐ Federal Agency
☒ Local Government
☐ University
☐ Other

Name of repository:
Wichita Parks & Recreation Department
Wichita Historic Preservation Office

North Riverside Park Comfort Station
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
County/State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1 acre

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

1. (NAD27)
   Zone 14 Easting 645453 Northing 4174071

2. Zone Easting Northing

3. Zone Easting Northing

4. Zone Easting Northing [ ] See continuation sheet

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Deon Wolfenbarger, Historic Preservation Consultant
organization Three Gables Preservation date August 7, 2006
street & number 320 Pine Glade Road telephone 202-258-3136
city or town Nederland state CO zip code 80466

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps
A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs
Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

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

Property Owner

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

name City of Wichita Parks & Recreation Department
street & number City Hall, 11th Floor; 455 N. Main telephone 316-268-4361
city or town Wichita state Kansas zip code 67202

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

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

SUMMARY

The North Riverside Park Comfort Station is located in North Riverside Park, a thirty acre park in Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas. The park is bounded by 10th and 11th Streets on the north, Larimer Street on the east, 11th Street and the Little Arkansas River on the northwest, and Oak Park Drive and the Little Arkansas River on the south. The comfort station is located between Bitting and Pearce Streets, just west of the permanent shelter house known as Park Villa. It is an example of a "social and recreational" facility discussed in Section F of the Multiple Property Documentation Form "New Deal-era Resources of Kansas" (hereafter referred to as "MPDF"). The brick comfort station exhibits the character-defining features of the Art Deco style, as evidenced by its simplified form and streamlined shape, stepped facade, iron grills in windows, ornamental detailing executed in the same material as the building, low relief geometrical and stylized floral motifs, and polychromatic colors.[1] The shelter retains a very high degree of integrity all areas of consideration.

ELABORATION

North Riverside Park is on the north side of the Little Arkansas River and Oak Park Drive. The park is between 10th and 11th Streets on the north, Larimer Street on the east, 11th Street and the Little Arkansas River on the northwest, and Oak Park Drive and the Little Arkansas River on south. The comfort station is located between Bitting and Pearce Streets, just west of the elaborate Park Villa shelter house. The nominated parcel just contains the comfort station and an additional twenty-five feet on all sides. The comfort station, as it was called by its designer L.W. Clapp, is a park facility rest room located to the west of the Park Villa building. The comfort station is set on a relatively level land overlooking the Little Arkansas River to the south, with deciduous trees scattered about the park site. Concrete sidewalks from the entry doors lead to the east towards parking and Park Villa.

The one story symmetrical brick building has a basic rectangular plan for the central block which is flanked by wings on either side which are set lower in height and slightly recessed from the front and rear elevation. The main block has a central raised parapet with concrete coping, while the two side wings, which contain the "MEN" and "WOMEN" entry doors, have a slight parapet edge with brick header coping which curves up where it meets the central block. A slightly projecting bay in the center of both the north and south elevations (which are mirror images) has

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[1] John J.-G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History: 1981) 77; John C. Poppeliers, S. Allen Chambers, Jr., and Nancy B. Schwartz, *What Style is it? A Guide to American Architecture* (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1983) 88.

a single window with decorative iron grill. It has a incised concrete lintel and surround; the lintel has concrete tiles with varied floral motifs. Above is a wide concrete panel with incised foliage decorations matching the window surround. This window is flanked on each side by a pair of very narrow fixed sash windows. All windows have a simple concrete lugsill. Double vertical lines of recessed brick headers flank the two entry doors and the side windows. There are entries on both front and rear of the east and west wings. These entries are open (no doors) and feature a geometric metal grill surround set within the brick, featuring a leaf decoration in each upper corner, and a sign labeled for men or women. The interior walls are exposed brick, and the floors are poured concrete with areas of small glazed tiles. Metal panels (non-historic) separate the toilet facilities. The roof has exposed rafters and wood paneling. There are large paneled beams supporting the clerestory windows, and each side has a concrete panel with incised foliage decorations which match those on the exterior.

The comfort station is clad in buff brick. As described in the original specifications, the brick is "hard burned, rough texture, face brick, in varied shades of buff, with other shades: pale and medium darker shades of pink, approximately 20% showing pronounced zinc flashed of light and dark greenish color."[2] The building is notable for its cast stone decorations. In addition to the foliage panels on the north and south elevations, on each side elevation are recessed brick panels featuring Carthalite Art Deco decorations. Carthalite was a local trade name for a mixture of concrete mortar mixed with pigmentation. Some examples in Wichita were reported to use crushed colored glass as an additional pigmented aggregate; the North Riverside Comfort Station is the only documented example. Here on the comfort station, the Carthalite panel uses blue, green, and red on stylized rays. The panel is further accented with rust-colored brick and open cross brick decorations.

[2]Board of Park Commissioners, City of Wichita, Kansas, "Specifications. Toilet Building - - - - North Riverside," North Riverside Park Flat Files (Wichita, KS: City of Wichita Parks & Recreation Department).

SUMMARY

The North Riverside Park Comfort Station is significant under Criterion A in the area of ***Social History*** and Criterion C in the area of ***Architecture***. The comfort station is associated with the historic context outlined in the Multiple Property Documentation Form "New Deal-era Resources of Kansas" (hereafter referred to as "MPDF"). The context discusses the effect of the series of programs enacted by Franklin Roosevelt's administration during the Great Depression to provide relief, reform and recovery for the nation. These programs were collectively known as the "New Deal." Wichita and particularly the surrounding agricultural region were affected by not only the economic and agricultural depressions, but the drought and resulting Dust Bowl years during the "dirty thirties." A multitude of New Deal programs gave relief for the citizens of Wichita; some of these programs provided employment working on the construction or maintenance of public works projects. In Wichita, these work-relief projects ranged from the huge Ackerman Island removal project to painting and landscaping. The comfort station was constructed as a Civil Works Administration project in 1934 (its period of significance), and represents how the Wichita parks department was able to continue the development of its parks system through the use of federal assistance during the Depression, while at the same time providing jobs for the unemployed of Wichita. It is an excellent example of the Art Deco style as applied to a utilitarian park building, for its high artistic values evidenced on a small scale, and as a type of construction – Carthalite - which originated in Wichita.

ELABORATION

The North Riverside Park Comfort Station is located in park land along the banks of the Little Arkansas River. This land was first envisioned as a park by Finlay Ross. In 1872, while rowing up the Little Arkansas River, he reportedly said to his companion "that if he had the authority he would take the sand dunes along the river and convert them into a beautiful public park."[3] As a later three time mayor of Wichita, he as able to put his dreams into reality when in 1897, during his first term as mayor, the city purchased the bottom land along the river that today forms Central and North Riverside parks. It was L.W. Clapp, who also assisted Ross and the city in purchasing some of the land for North Riverside Park, that was primarily responsible for its development.[4]

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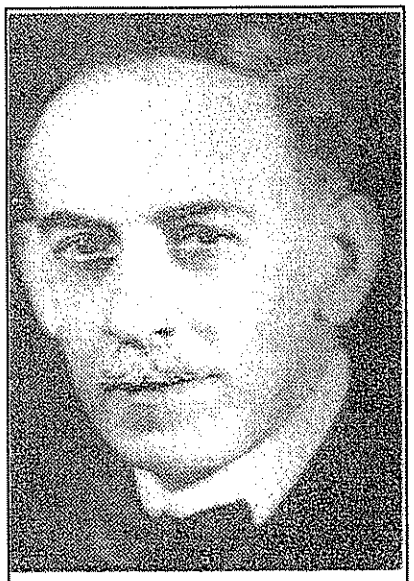
[3] *Wichita Eagle* (29 November 1925) 3.

[4] Pamela Kingsbury, "Historic Wichita Parks Survey Report," (2003) 2.



L. W. Clapp

Lewis William "L.W." Clapp arrived in Wichita during the boom years of the 1880s, and helped form a successful farm loan business. From 1917, he devoted himself to civic improvements for Wichita. Clapp served as Wichita's mayor from 1918-1919, City Manager from 1919-1921, and as President of the Board of Park Commission from 1921 until his death in 1934.[5] He was not only responsible for much of the early development of city's park system, but he also initiated the parks department's dependence upon the New Deal to fund the vast majority of maintenance and development projects in Wichita's parks during the 1930s. Clapp's involvement in the Wichita parks system, and in particular with the North Riverside Park Comfort Station, extended beyond the supervisory level as President of the board. He prepared the plans for the comfort station, paying particular attention to the details of the concrete and Carthalite panels. The plans for the building were completed in 1931, when the city was in the midst of the Depression and the parks department had no fund available for new construction. The lack of funds did not appear to deter Clapp in his design, which featured ornamental grill work and decorative brick patterns in addition to the cast concrete panels.

It is possible that a concession to the Depression was the use of concrete in place of stone, but this building material had already been successfully used in Wichita prior to the stock market crash of 1929. Carthalite is a unique cast concrete material that originated in Wichita by the Cement Stone & Supply Company, which was owned by the Lumbermen's Supply Company. The Cement Stone & Supply Company manufactured artificial ornamental trimming stone, while the Lumbermen's Supply was a distributor for building materials, including cast stone.[6] Cast stone products did not contain the air pockets common in natural limestone and therefore was recognized as a stronger material. It also provided the ability to easily replicate numerous detailed designs through the casting of multiple pieces, instead of a mason having to carve multiple copies of the same design.

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[5]Ibid., 4.

[6]Barbara Hammond, "Johnson Drug Store Building," National Register of Historic Places nomination form, 8-4.

Although cast stone had been used as a building material for centuries in Europe, the Cement Stone & Supply Company transformed the product when they added color to the mortar and began casting stylized Art Deco panels. Their process included the use of mineral oxide pigments which produced a mosaic effect in both high and low relief. While other companies were using color to enhance the cast stone product, the use of crushed colored glass in the mortar is credited to Benjamin "Frank" Krehbeil, the manager of the Cement Stone & Supply Company. Local legend claims that different colors and textures were formed by the bottles from different trade name products, such as Mentholatum® and Milk of Magnesia®.[7] There is further belief that all Carthalite panels in Wichita utilized crushed glass. This latter impression does not appear to be true, but crushed colored glass is clearly evident in the Art Deco panels on both ends of the North Riverside Comfort Station. The Lindbergh Mural at the former Municipal Airport Building, also constructed with New Deal funds, is also purported to have crushed glass, but it is presently mounted too high for visual inspection. L.W. Clapp was the designer for both panels, however, and it may be that Clapp promoted the used of glass as a colorant.[8] He was clearly particular about his requirements for the cast stone in the comfort station, as the excerpt from the specifications below indicates:

> Cast stone:
> QUALITY, TYPE, FINISHED, WORKMANSHIP, ETC., Material indicated on drawings as cast stone shall be the product of an established plant having capacity and facilities for producing the specified quality and quantity of cast stone without delaying the progress of the work.
>
> Cast stone shall have a compressive strength of not less than 5,000 pounds per square inch and an adsorption not greater than 7% when tested according to the requirements of American Concrete Institute Tentative Specification ---- or Federal Specifications ----.
>
> The ornamental pieces are to be modeled by a skilled modeler as approved by the Board of Park Commissioners and full size models must be submitted for approval before any casting is done. It will be necessary to model the full panels on the sides as no repetition will be allowed.

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[7] Ibid., 8-6.

[8] Ibid.

> Color The color of the cast stone will be selected by the Board of park Commissioners. The colors used on [*undecipherable*] ornaments are to be obtained by the used of colored aggregates and only enough permanent cement colors used to color the cement. Cast stone shall be thoroughly cured and seasoned and shall have attained the specified strength and density before being delivered to the building site. No cast stone shall be delivered before it is 20 days old.[9]

Although Carthalite and cast stone was clearly less expensive than traditional stone carving and masonry, it is possible that Clapp preferred the flexibility in design and coloration that was afforded by this building material. However, a clear concession to the economic conditions that the parks department was facing in 1931 was noted in the building specifications for the comfort station. There it states that the excavation and foundation were to be "completed by the Park board with unemployed labor; materials on hand in form of old paving blocks, broken sidewalk, and curbs." As these specs were prepared prior to the establishment of Roosevelt's New Deal work relief programs, the remainder of the work was put out to bid. It is nonetheless still noteworthy as an indication of the severity of the employment situation in Wichita at this time.

Although educated as a lawyer, L.W. Clapp provides clear evidence of his architectural skills in the design of the North Riverside Park Comfort Station. Although small and utilitarian, the comfort station clearly exhibits the features of the Art Deco style, as evidenced by its simplified form and streamlined shape, stepped facade, iron grill in windows, ornamental detailing executed in the same material as the building, low relief geometrical and stylized floral motifs, and polychromatic colors.[10] It also contains one of the few recorded examples of the use of crushed glass in its Carthalite panels, and is an excellent representative of a type of construction. It is therefore significant under Criterion C in the area of ***architecture.***. In addition, its construction history is associated with a New Deal work-relief program, and it illustrates the ability of the Wichita parks system to continue its program of expansion and development during the Depression years.

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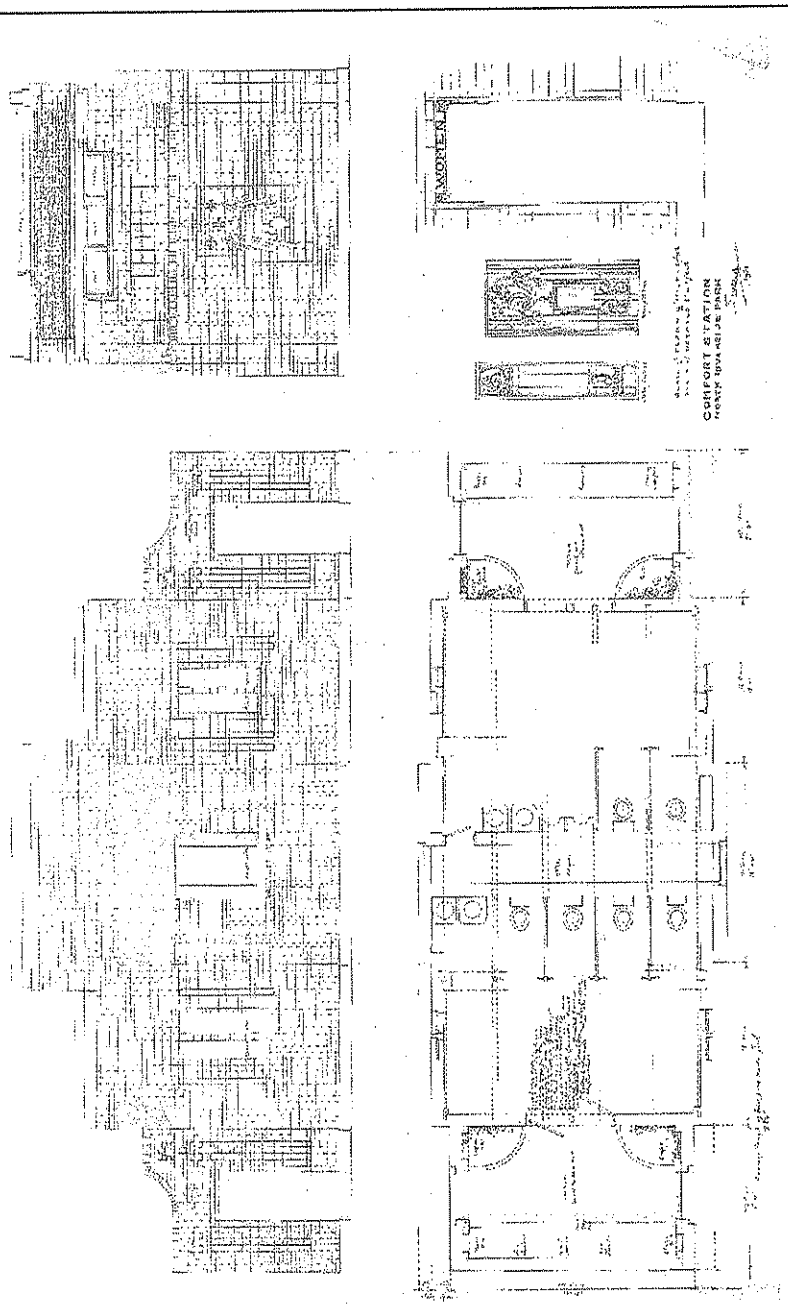
[9] Board of Park Commissioners, City of Wichita, Kansas.

[10] Blumenson, 77; Poppeliers, 88.



Plans courtesy of the City of Wichita's Parks & Recreation Department

The New Deal in Wichita

Wichita had enjoyed a decade of prosperity and growth during the 1920s. It was not unusual, then, to find that few residents in Wichita were overly concerned with the stock market crash of 1929. As Nestor Weigand noted later, "the big cities were oriented to buying stocks, we weren't and there weren't a lot of local companies issuing stock."[11] Wichita was always an optimistic city, and the 1920s had been a decade replete with that optimism. And why not? The booming growth of that decade was shared by nearly every sector of the city's economy: housing, business, and new industries, not the least of which was aviation. Although the surrounding agricultural area had suffered during the 1920s, this too was slowly improving by the time of the stock market crash. Even in 1930, there were few signs that the impending nationwide economic catastrophe would eventually affect Wichita. That would soon change. Employees began to be laid off in the early 1930s as companies experienced declining profits. At the beginning of 1932, there were 500 employees of Wichita's Coleman Lamp and Stove Company, which was about half the number it employed just a few years ago.[12] Other companies would not weather the economic crisis, and when forced into bankruptcy, all of their employees were added to the unemployment rolls. The aviation industry, which seemed so promising for Wichita's future just a few years ago, was suffering. Foreclosure judgement on the Swallow Airplane Company buildings, land, and equipment was granted in October 1932 on the basis of overdue promissory notes owed Russell Moore, Wichita capitalist.[13] Other transportation-related companies were suffering as well. The Wichita Transportation Company began operating at a deficit in 1930, the first year of the Depression. The Frisco Railroad went into receivership in November 1932, and at the end of March 1933, the Missouri Pacific Railroad filed for bankruptcy.[14] In an attempt to avoid the same result, passenger fares on the Arkansas Valley Interurban railway were reduced in April 1933 from 3.6 cents per mile to 2.5 cents per mile, and the Yellow Cab Company reduced its fares in 1932 and dropped its charge for extra passengers.[15]

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[11]Craig Miner, *Wichita: The Magic City* (Wichita: Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum Association, 1988) 177.

[12]*Wichita Eagle* (7 January 1932) 5.

[13]Ibid., (7 October 1932) 5.

[14]Ibid., (2 November 1932) 1; (1 April 1933) 1.

[15]Ibid., (31 March 1933) 3; (3 April 1932) 5.

Wichita workers that did not lose their jobs saw either their pay or hours reduced. When the Wichita Transportation Company proposed reducing the wages of bus drivers and street car motorman by five cents an hour in 1932 and refused to negotiate, the employees took their complaints to the city commission.[16] By contrast, Wichita school teachers, who had taken a ten percent pay cut at the start of the contract year for 1932-1933, voluntarily offered in February 1933 to take a further ten percent cut for the remainder of the contract year in order to keep their jobs.[17] Salaries at the Municipal University of Wichita were also cut by ten percent in 1930, and twenty percent in 1931.[18]

Agricultural conditions in the region surrounding Wichita worsened in the early 1930s as well. In fact, agriculture during the 1920s never really experienced the same growth as other segments of the economy. The first World War had inflated wheat prices in the United States, in part due reduced foreign competition coupled with an increased demand. Once the war began, the federal government guaranteed wheat prices at over two dollars a bushel — more than double that of the richest boom year prior to that time. These prices however, created an artificial norm against which farmers would subsequently compare their situation. It also witnessed a quickening in the pace of farm rationalization throughout the states of the Midwest and Great Plains. More and more farmers turned to machines to facilitate the cultivation of their fields, and more significantly, to bring even more acres under the plow in order to take advantage of high wheat prices by expanding their production. With the eventual resumption of agriculture in Europe after World War I, wheat prices declined dramatically. Farmers felt that the only way to make ends meet was to once again increase their acreage. Technological innovations in the 1920s, including the one-way disc plow invented by a Kansas farmer, allowed farmers to plow under even greater amounts of sod for wheat cultivation. These new plows, along with mechanized tractors and combines and finally the additional acreage, were all expensive to purchase. Most farmers during the twenties had to rely on creative financing in an attempt to plow more acres of wheat, with the hope they could eventually come out ahead.[19] With persistence and a favorable

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[16] *Wichita Beacon* (29 March 1932) 10.

[17] *Wichita Eagle* (7 February 1933) 5.

[18] Miner, 177.

[19] Mark D. Hersey, "Dust In The Wind," *KansasHistoryOnline*, ed. Henry J. Fortunato, [5/27/2004], Hall Center for the Humanities, <http://www.kansashistoryonline.org/ksh/articlepage.asp?artid=104> (26 June 2006).

weather cycle, though, wheat prices were beginning to rise by the time of the stock market crash, although prices still had not reached their war levels.

After the crash, prices for all agricultural products began to decline in 1930. More significant for agriculture on the Great Plains was the severe drought that began in 1931 and lasted nearly a decade; this led to the collapse of farm prices nationwide. The drought did not affect the wheat production totals in the state in 1931, which was the largest crop in history until 1947, but price per bushel of 33 cents was the lowest on record. The following year, the number of statewide barrels dropped fifty percent due to both low prices and the poorest planting conditions in years. The drought conditions worsened in 1933, and the state average yield per acre was 9.1 bushels, the lowest in 38 years. The total wheat production was the smallest since 1917.[20] As a large segment of Wichita's economy was dependent upon the success of the wheat crops, these statistics further impacted the local economy. Wheat prices in Wichita reflected the national and statewide trends, with the price of wagon wheat in Wichita dropped to its lowest prices in 1931 and 1932, where it ranged from 26 to 34 cents per bushel.[21] The drought affected livestock as well, with livestock receipts in Wichita dropping in 1931 to 906,781 head, compared with 1,056,214 in 1930.[22]

With almost all segments of the economy affected by the Depression, there was naturally less revenue coming into the city's coffers. Delinquent taxes and reductions in revenue cut the city's income by nearly one half million in 1931 and 1932. Any consideration of improving or building new civic projects, or even maintaining the city's infrastructure was put on hold until other funding sources could be found. Even that was not enough to cover the loss in revenues. In order to remain solvent, the city eliminated jobs and reduced the wages of those employees that remained by twelve to twenty percent.[23]

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[20]Kansas Department of Agriculture & U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Kansas Wheat History* (Topeka, KS: Kansas Department of Agriculture, Statistics Division, November 2004) 6-7.

[21]*Wichita Eagle* (21 June 1936) 7.

[22]Ibid., (1 January 1932) 2.

[23]Miner, 180.

For those residents that lost jobs, either private or public, some relief was provided by local governments or charity. Prior to the establishment of any federal relief programs, the city, county and community chest provided over 53,000 man days of work for Wichita residents. Due to the extreme demand for assistance, this relief work was restricted to married men who had resided in the city for at least a year and who had no other source of income. The unemployed were allowed two days of work a week at a wage of $2.25 a day. The city also sponsored "tag days" to allow the unemployed to work off debts for necessities. Private charities tried their best to provide assistance, although their funds were also stretched to the limits due to the Depression. The Lions Club and Salvation Army erected apple stands on street corners for the unemployed, but it was unlikely that this provided much aid to families during this crisis.[24] A record number of unemployed was recorded in Wichita at the start of 1932, and reports of suicides began to dominate the local newspaper headlines.[25]

Although Wichita tried to meet the needs of local citizens, the scope of the economic and agricultural crises was beyond the city's means to solve. It would require measures from the state and national levels. At first, though, the responses from both were generally weak or ineffective. Kansas' state constitution contained legislation that precluded it from caring for the poor. Cities and towns in the state could divert funds from their budgets for work relief, but were not allowed by law to appropriate any money for direct relief. Although nearly two million dollars had been raised in 1931 by the state's counties for poor relief, by the end of the summer of 1932, all of these funds were depleted.[26] Governor Woodring formed the Kansas Federal Relief Committee in July 1932 (later renamed the Kansas Emergency Relief Committee, or KERC), but it was formed primarily as a conduit for any federal funds that may be furnished to the state. In effect, the state turned to the federal government for help.[27]

Nearly three years after the onset of the national Depression, President Hoover finally signed the Emergency Relief and Construction Act. This act, which provided federal loans to the states to

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[24]Ibid., 180.

[25]R. M. Long, *Wichita Century: A Pictorial History of Wichita, Kansas, 1870-1970* (Wichita, KS: Wichita Historical Museum Association, Inc., 1969) 163-164.

[26]Tully, 19.

[27]Ibid., 21.

finance the construction of public works, failed to provide much relief to Kansas or the nation. The Depression, which had now expanded worldwide, combined with the effects of the drought, eventually brought Wichita's growth to a standstill. For the first time in memory for many Wichita residents, the population decreased, although slightly. The assessor recorded a decrease in the county's population in 1931, the State Board of Agriculture reported that the city lost 2599 in population from 1932 to 1933; the Chamber of Commerce naturally disputed the figure, perhaps hoping to keep further bad news about the economic situation from the residents.[28]

In these desperate times, Americans would eventually turn to the federal government for assistance. They would not be disappointed. Over the next decade, federal government agencies assisted Wichita, the state, and the nation by creating programs that funded public improvement projects and provided work for the unemployed as well. These agencies were part of Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal," a term coined during his acceptance of the Democratic party's nomination to the presidency.

"I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people."
Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Immediately after his inauguration in March 1933, Roosevelt took action by declaring a national bank holiday. The purpose of this holiday to was place a short moratorium on the bank closures that were sweeping the nation. For some, it was too late, as the Depression continued to worsen before some of Roosevelt's other measures could take effect. There were thirteen banks in Wichita just before the crash in 1929. Only six remained to reopen in 1933 after the moratorium.[29] Some, like the Union National Bank building, were sold at a sheriff's sale, to satisfy their judgements.[30] The greatest impact the holiday may have had was on the nation's mood – here, finally, was a president that would take action. Indeed, no one can accuse his administration of inaction. In his first one hundred days of office, Roosevelt created a virtual "alphabet army" of New Deal programs. These programs provided millions of dollars for jobs and public projects; more importantly, they brought a hope to an impoverished nation.

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[28] *Wichita Eagle* (14 May 1932) 5; (14 October 1933) 2.

[29] Kay Kirkman, *Wichita: A Pictorial History* (Norfolk, VA: Donning Company, 1981) 103.

[30] *Wichita Eagle* (17 September 1933) 5.

Franklin Roosevelt's administration addressed the problems of the nation with a basic three-pronged approach: relief, reform, and recovery. A number of New Deal programs were regulatory in nature, affecting banking, business, labor, the stock market, prices, agriculture and business loans, and farm subsidy programs. Other New Deal programs sought to alleviate the immediate problem of relief for the unemployed, which was undertaken in two ways. The first was to provide direct relief to families, many of whom had been out-of-work for years. Second, the New Deal initiated several programs that provided work for the unemployed through public improvement projects. Some of the projects were service-oriented, such as canning and sewing projects, hot school lunch projects, and white-collar jobs. Others put people back to work on the construction of public buildings and works projects. Some of the most common construction agencies were the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Public Works Administration (PWA), and the Works Progress Administration (later the Works Projects Administration, or WPA). Other less common programs included the National Youth Administration (NYA).

In spite of Wichita's general reluctance to accept federal intervention and its preference for private action instead, all of the New Deal programs – not just those that constructed public projects – significantly impacted the city's economy during the Depression. As Craig Miner noted in *Wichita: The Magic City*, New Deal programs were enthusiastically accepted by the city government "as a way not only of surviving with minimal disturbance from the unemployed, but actually constructing with federal help long delayed projects that would be important to Wichita's prosperity in the post-emergency years." Furthermore, it did not want "to let hard times deprive it permanently of its reputation as a progressive place."[31] So the city took full advantage of the offer of federal funds for relief and recovery. In addition to direct relief, much of the federal assistance went towards projects that not only put people back to work, but built civic projects that would last through to the next century.

Wichita jumped on the bandwagon of support for the New Deal, which was relayed in a December 1933 issue of the *Eagle*, which printed a full-age portrait of Roosevelt with a caption "Mr. President – Wichita is Behind You." The reason for the support was obvious. Within less than a year of existence, Roosevelt's New Deal programs had already benefitted the city of Wichita by putting 2,800 people back to work in private business, increasing the city payroll by $170,000 monthly, putting 4,700 back to work on civil works projects in Wichita at a weekly rate of $12, loaning over $40 million from the Wichita Regional Agricultural Credit Corporation to

[31] Miner, 181-182; 179.

farmers in four surrounding states, and providing 600 home loans for area residents by the Home Owners Loan Corporation.[32]

Although many of the foundations for Roosevelt's New Deal programs were established by the mid-1930s, the effects of the Depression were far-reaching, and would take years to overcome. Furthermore, nature continued to assault the Great Plains. Dust storms plagued Wichita throughout the mid-1930s, with the worst dust storm the city had seen occurring on April 11, 1935. This storm suspended about five million tons of sediment over a 78 square kilometer area near Wichita. An all time record high temperature of 112.3 degrees Fahrenheit was set on July 18, 1935, and dust storms still affected the city in 1937.[33] Thus federal support for Wichita's economy through New Deal programs increased even more in the latter half of the thirties. In 1934, over $25 million was spent on relief in Sedgwick County. By 1935 relief programs in Wichita, with over sixty case workers hired to handle the paperwork, were a major part of the economy. It was estimated 25,000 people in Sedgwick County were dependent on these programs, approximately one quarter of the county's population. When the WPA became active in 1935, the amount of federal involvement in the local economy grew even more. Between 1935 and 1940, this one agency alone spent $8,500,000 in Wichita and at one time employed 3,000 local people.[34] Wichita's population began to rise again, albeit slowly. One theory for this might be the exodus of families from the surrounding agricultural region into the city in hopes of obtaining work, either through private employment but more likely through one of the many large New Deal work-relief projects in Wichita.

Near the end of the 1930s, Wichita's economy began to rebound earlier than some other areas of the country. The development of oil fields nearby helped, as did the renewed growth in the aircraft industry at the end of the decade. Employment in Wichita's aircraft factories tripled from the previous year in 1940, reaching 4700.[35] With the nation gearing up for war, that number exploded in the following year. Many could thus successfully argue that Roosevelt's New Deal programs were not responsible for lifting Wichita out of the Depression. However, for the

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[32]Ibid., 181.

[33]*Wichita Eagle* (11 April 1935) 1; (19 July 1936) 2; (16 February 1937) 12.

[34]Miner, 182.

[35]*Wichita Eagle* (24 November 1940), 1.

individual families that received direct assistance, loans, or employment, the New Deal carried them through the difficult times of the Depression and the Dust Bowl. Furthermore, without the construction of public projects funded and built by New Deal programs, Wichita would have been ill-prepared to face the boom years that would follow. The city was able to put the devastating years of the Depression behind it as it continued to use New Deal projects in the coming decades, ranging from countless road and park improvements, extensive expansion of the municipal university, a new art museum, and a new water softening system and filtration plant.

The New Deal & Work Relief: the Civil Works Administration

The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) was created on May 12, 1933, and was one of the most significant relief programs in Roosevelt's "First Hundred Days." At first FERA provided direct relief payments for the needy, but it eventually grew to also include work relief programs. It was an expansive program, however, and it took time to establish FERA's payments for direct relief. Meanwhile, the economic conditions of the Depression continued to worsen through 1933, and the nation's unemployment figures continued to rise. The Roosevelt administration had put into place several programs in hopes of getting people back to work, including the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Public Works Administration (PWA). By late 1933, however, none of these programs had enough effect yet to stave off the coming winter emergency. The CCC was aimed solely at providing employment for young, unmarried men. The Public Works Administration, on the other hand, focused on large scale projects that were not required to hire men from the unemployment rolls. Furthermore, large public works projects required careful planning and technical expertise, and many were not yet underway in 1933. The PWA was therefore not producing results as quickly as conditions demanded.

The Depression was entering into its fifth year; winter was approaching, and fifteen million people were unemployed. There were serious worries of unrest among the large number of unemployed. A new form of aid was needed – one that was quick, and yet did not put employable people on the "dole." In an attempt to end the federal government's role in "dole and make-work projects," Roosevelt's administration experimented with a new work relief program, the Civil Works Administration (CWA).

With a goal to provide quick emergency employment during the winter months of 1933-1934, Harry Hopkins, chief administrator of FERA, proposed a series of public works programs in late 1933 which were intended to supplement the assistance of FERA until the other relief programs could take effect. As a result, the Federal Civil Works Administration (CWA) was created in November 1933. Roosevelt pledged to provide jobs for four million people within thirty days.

Unlike FERA, which was administered out of each state and locality, the CWA was established as a separate federally-operated program. Part of the PWA's funds were diverted for the CWA to be used for direct employment. In just two months after the CWA's creation, over four million Americans were employed by the "most massive work-relief experiment undertaken."[36] CWA projects were required to take place on public property, be constructive in nature, and have a cost ratio of approximately 70 percent labor to 30 percent materials. Local businesses as well as the communities were encouraged to furnish building supplies so that most of funds would support wages.

Once the program was finally underway, a variety of public improvement projects were undertaken throughout Kansas. Many were small jobs, since the projects were intended to last only ninety days. Several projects involved only a few men, such as repair work to public streets and properties. A few other projects were quite large and involved hundreds of men; only cities such as Wichita had the ability to plan and undertake projects like this. Still, since the CWA was so short-lived, many of the large projects could not be finished in time. These were often later completed by other New Deal work relief programs that replaced the CWA, such as FERA and the Works Progress Administration (WPA). In Kansas, the KERC was involved in approval of both CWA and FERA projects. Consequently, it is not unusual that today many confuse the myriad overlapping "Alphabet Army" work programs.

Nationwide, the CWA met Roosevelt's goal of providing much needed short-term employment. By Thanksgiving 1933, 800,000 people at work, and by mid-January, almost 4.3 million people were receiving benefits from CWA. Hopkins purportedly was quoted as telling FDR "Well, they're all at work, but for God's sake, don't ask me what they're doing."[37] As the CWA's expenditures had quickly gone beyond its November appropriations, almost as quickly as the CWA program began, Hopkins was forced to cut back expenditures. Hopkins instructed state CWA administrators to cut weekly working hours immediately. By Easter weekend 1934, the program was closed down completely.

Lasting just a little over four months, unemployed workers from all walks of life had found jobs through the CWA. Many worked on construction-related projects, such as repairing or building

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[36]Bonnie Fox Schwartz, *The Civil Works Administration, 1933-1936* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), ii.

[37]In Schwartz, p. 182.

roads, water mains, sewer lines, airports, public buildings and recreational facilities. The agency nationwide had built or improved 40,0000 schools, 3,500 parks or recreational facilities, 500,000 miles of roads, and over 1,000 airports – all in 136 days![38] Later, white-collar positions were added to the program. The CWA, although intended only as a stop-gap measure to get the country through the winter months when no other large projects would be initiated, still met with criticism. It was never able to employ more than one third of those looking for work in the larger cities. The CWA was also a costly program, spending over $800 million nationwide in four and a half months. An important intangible benefit, though, was the psychological effect that working brought to millions of Americans. Many who had lost hope now had faith that they could someday work again.[39] It was also one of the first New Deal work programs which worked on public improvement projects, paving the way for the others that would follow.

Almost immediately after the announcement of the program, Wichita was ready with applications for CWA projects. In late November 1933, more than $500,000 in civil works projects for Sedgwick County were approved, including the complete rebuilding of old Central fire station and the Ackerman island project. This initial round of projects would put 2500 men back to work in Wichita, with 1800 men working on the Ackerman island project, 100 on the fire station, 250 on sanding of streets in Wichita, and 250 in the city's parks. The city followed this up with another application in December 1933 to construct new shops and freight yards for the Arkansas Valley Interurban company southwest of McLean Boulevard. The material from the old shops was reused to built a tool house and garage for the city's public works department.[40]

By the time the CWA program ended in early 1934, the CWA had paid out over $1 million in wages to local workers and $75,000 to businessmen for materials. In addition to aforementioned projects, the CWA funded the construction of the city jail and several bridges as well as initial improvements at the Municipal airport and the Lawrence Athletic Field. There were also smaller construction projects at North and East high schools.[41] The city parks department, however, may

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[38]Ibid., p. 186.

[39]Ibid., p. 191.

[40]*Wichita Eagle* (29 November 1933) 5; (28 December 1933) 3.

[41]Sondra Van Meter, *Our Common School Heritage: A History of the Wichita Public Schools* (Wichita: Board of Education of Unified School District No. 259, 1977) 190.

have been the most successful in taking advantage of this short-lived program. Several projects had been planned for various parks in the 1920s, but the Depression had crushed all hopes of their construction. When news of this program and its funding arrived, the parks department was able to quickly pull together several small projects. At Sim Park, a utility building and golf clubhouse were built from old paving blocks. The golf course was also improved, and many picnic ovens, tables and benches were constructed. All of the city's eleven city parks were landscaped.

The CWA was replaced by FERA work relief programs, which were not as well received by the unemployed of Wichita. FERA projects only hired the most needy unemployed, while the CWA hired virtually anyone as long as they were out of work. FERA also reduced wages by almost half. This resulted in protest rallies by the unemployed at Payne's Pasture, where the Lawrence Athletic Field and stadium was under construction, and at Riverside Park, where upwards of 2,500 workers walked off their relief jobs and marched for higher pay. On May 6, 1934, marchers clashed with Wichita police, and three policemen were stabbed or beaten. The Governor called out the National Guard, and the next day two companies arrived with field artillery.[42] The CWA was clearly a popular program with Wichita workers, who clearly agreed with Kansas Governor Alf Landon when he wrote to President Roosevelt that "This Civil Works program is one of the soundest, most constructive policies of your administration, and I cannot urge too strongly its continuance."[43]

In other instances, plans that had been shelved due to the Depression were pulled out again. The North Riverside Park Comfort Station is an example of such a project. Designed in 1931 by L.W. Clapp, its plans clearly were not the typical frugal results of the Depression. Since it was a relatively small project, though, it was feasible to complete in the short construction period imposed by the CWA program. Through its professionally staffed city departments, a large pool of available unemployed workers, and ready-designed architectural plans, Wichita was in a good position not only to quickly apply for the CWA funds when they became available, but to immediately implement the projects once they were awarded the grants.

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[42]Miner., 182.

[43]Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959) 277.

North Riverside Park and the New Deal

In Wichita, the parks department was clearly a significant beneficiary of the New Deal work relief programs and funding. A substantial amount of maintenance and construction work in the city's park system, which had been delayed due to the Depression, was carried out by workers paid for by the various New Deal work programs, including the Civil Works Administration, Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and Works Progress Administration. Many of these projects covered grading, seeding, grading, seeding, riverbank stabilization, and other landscape maintenance. In addition to park projects, the New Deal funded the majority of the $540,000 in runways at the municipal airport, paid for numerous road and bridge projects (which included over 500 miles of new roads), built the city's new water system, and significantly expanded the Municipal University campus. In terms of dollars and man hours, the numerous road and runway projects comprised the bulk of the New Deal construction projects in Wichita; hundreds of men were employed on single projects in these categories. Sedgwick County projects also provided employment for hundreds of men, both for farm-to-market roads and water control and conservation. In terms of extant resources in Wichita, though, the city's parks department was the greatest beneficiary of the WPA.

Acquired in 1897, North Riverside Park had experienced some development prior to the onset of the Depression, with the most notable feature being the Park Villa shelter house. With the severe budgetary restrictions facing all city departments during the 1930s, though, any further development plans for the park were put on hold; the city had a difficult time even paying for maintenance of the existing parks. This undoubtedly discouraged L.W. Clapp, as his plans for Riverside Park were incomplete. The magnificent Park Villa shelter house was a popular feature and encouraged families to visit, but there were no restroom facilities for use within the park. When Roosevelt's New Deal provided funding and workers for public projects, Clapp moved quickly to take advantage of the various work relief programs. Not including general maintenance projects, the North Riverside Park Comfort Station was the first significant construction project in the Wichita parks system to take advantage of New Deal funding. With the establishment of the WPA and its much larger budget, the parks department expanded its development plans, and soon every park was the beneficiary of either a maintenance or construction project. Clapp's plans for the North Riverside Park Comfort Station represented the first new construction in a city park to be federally funded and built by New Deal workers.

During the remainder of the 1930s, North Riverside Park benefitted from other New Deal projects. The same CWA project funded remodeling of Park Villa.[44] WPA installed concrete storm sewers in 1936, curbs and gutters, riprap along the river banks, and in 1937, the concrete walks around the comfort station. A substantial amount of landscape work, including plowing, grading, spading, fine grading, fertilizing, black dirt fill, and planting grass was undertaking in June 1937.[45] It is clear that everyday maintenance and care of the city's park system was paid for and undertaken by the WPA during the mid-1930s.

The North Riverside Park Comfort Station is significant as an excellent representative of the numerous New Deal work relief projects that were implemented in Wichita's parks system. The work relief programs implemented by the Roosevelt administration provided much needed jobs for the unemployed of the city – from artists to writers, engineers to construction workers, and men, women and youth alike. The Civil Works Administration program was designed to put a large number of people to work on short-term projects during the dark winter months of 1933-1934. In other Kansas communities, the short time which was given not only for the project applications, but for the actual construction, precluded the funding of any complex projects. In fact, the majority of CWA projects were maintenance and repair. In Wichita, however, a professionally staffed parks department utilized this federal program to implement already developed plans for this building. As with other New Deal programs, putting unemployed people to work on civic projects was not without its critics. For the citizens of Wichita, however, the physical results of Roosevelt's New Deal would not only serve as tangible reminders of his experiment, but would be used and enjoyed for decades. The comfort station is thus significant under Criterion A in the area of ***Social History*** as the first significant New Deal construction project in a Wichita park, and as a rare example of a CWA construction project in the city which provided relief through jobs for the unemployed of the city during the Great Depression.

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[44] *Wichita Eagle* (9 January 1934) 2.

[45] North Riverside Park Flat Files (Wichita, KS: City of Wichita Parks & Recreation Department).

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Additional newspaper references

Obtained from the online "Tihen Notes" at Wichita State University Libraries' Department of Special Collections. Dr. Edward N. Tihen's research of Wichita newspapers provides synopses of newspaper articles and identifies the newspaper and the pages on which the articles are found. Dr. Tihen's notes are found at:

<http://specialcollections.wichita.edu/collections/local_history/tihen/index.asp>

The specific newspapers cited and page numbers containing the articles are below.

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2 November 1932, p. 1.
7 February 1933, p. 5.
31 March 1933, p. 3.
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29 November 1933, p. 5.
28 December 1933, p. 3.
11 April 1935, p. 1.
21 June 1936, p. 7.
9 July 1936, p. 2.
16 February 1937, p. 12.
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property is a rectangular parcel measuring 90 x 40 feet, whose northwest corner is 40 feet northwest of the northwest corner of the comfort station's foundation, and whose southeast corner is 40 feet southeast of the southeast corner of the foundation of the comfort station. The legal description of the park in which the comfort station is located is as follows: BEG 1746 FT E SW COR NW ¼ N 775 FT W 1424 FT N 585 FT W 822 FT NW 256 FT W 580 FT SE ALG RIV TO PT ON SECLI E TO BEG NE ¼ SEC 18 & NW ¼ SEC 17-27-1E. See attached map.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The property's boundaries encompass only the land immediately adjacent to the comfort station, as the remainder of the park has not been evaluated for its eligibility for listing in the National Register. The historical associations with the Civil Works Administration apply only to this building, and not to any other elements of the park.

The following information applies to photograph 1:
Photographer: Unknown
Date of photograph: Unknown
Description of View: Historic photo, looking northwest
Location of original photo: City of Wichita Parks & Recreation Department; City Hall, 11th floor; 455 North Main; Wichita, KS

The following information applies to photographs 2-8:
Photographer: Deon Wolfenbarger
Date of Photograph: 1/31/2006

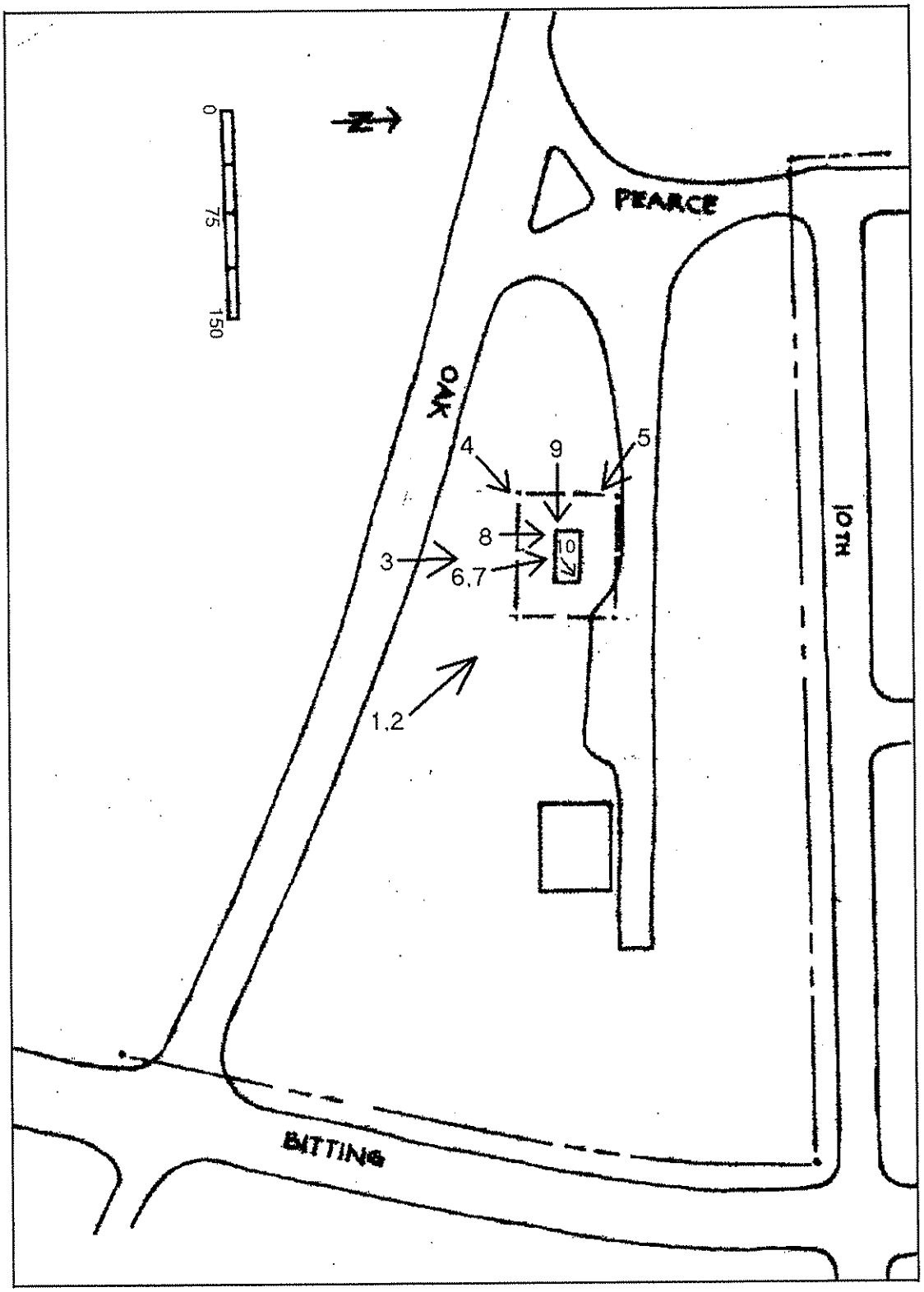
The following information applies to photograph 10:
Photographer: Kathy Morgan
Date of Photograph: 9/7/2006

The following information applies to photographs 2-9:
Location of negative: Wichita-Sedgwick County Metropolitan Area Planning Department; City Hall, 10th floor; 455 N. Main; Wichita, Kansas 67202-1688

Photo #	Description of View
2.	Looking northwest at front and east elevation of comfort station
3.	Looking north at front of comfort station
4.	Looking northeast at front and west elevation of comfort station
5.	Looking southeast at rear and west elevation of comfort station
6.	Looking north at window and decorative concrete panel
7.	Looking north at window and decorative grill
8.	Looking north at Men's entry to comfort station

9. Looking east at Art Deco Carthalite panel on west elevation of comfort station

North Riverside Park Comfort Station Site Map



LEGEND

5 Photo Number & Direction