

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register Listed
1-20-2012

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Peabody City Park

other names/site number Marion County Agricultural Society Fairgrounds; 115-850

2. Location

street & number Entrance to Park at West 2nd Street and Locust Street not for publication

city or town Peabody vicinity

state Kansas code KS county Marion code 115 zip code 66866

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide x local

SEE FILE

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

 other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	3	buildings
		district
1		site
4	1	structure
20		object
26	4	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 Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

- Recreation & Culture: Fairgrounds
- Recreation & Culture: Outdoor Recreation/Park
- Recreation & Culture: Sports Facility/Playing Field

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

- Recreation & Culture: Outdoor Recreation/Park
- Recreation & Culture: Sports Facility/Playing Field

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

- Other: Wood-frame Octagonal
- New Deal-era Rustic

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation: Concrete; Stone: Limestone
- walls: Wood: Vertical siding
- roof: Wood: Shingle
- other:

Narrative Description

Summary

The Peabody City Park is located along the west edge of town at the end of West Second Street. This park is a layered landscape that retains important components of its development from fairground to New Deal park to modern city park, including a horse racetrack, octagonal floral exhibition hall, entrance gates, athletic field with stone bleachers, picnic tables and stoves, and plantings.

Elaboration

Peabody City Park is located on the western edge of the town of Peabody, Marion County, Kansas. The main entrance to the park is located on the east side of the property at the intersection of West Second and North Locust Streets. Today, the 23.16-acre site, which almost imperceptibly slopes south, is generally bounded by West Division Avenue on the north; North Locust Street on the east; Spring Creek to the south; and Nighthawk Road/Peabody Street on the west. Spring Creek runs northwest to southeast, making the eastern portion of the site longer (north to south) than the western portion.

The park contains a number of resources. Historic resources include: a floral exhibition hall, a horse racetrack, a combination football and baseball field with two sets of stone bleachers, numerous picnic tables and stoves, and stone entrance piers, as well as the remnants of historic plantings. Non-historic features continuing the function of public park include: playground equipment, a swimming pool, a maintenance shed, restroom building, and a 2004 shelter house.

The racetrack is the park's major circulation system. From the entrance, an asphalt driveway leads west, passing the athletic field to the south and terminating at the center of the park on the north side of the floral exhibition hall. Three smaller arterial gravel paths begin here and lead north, west, and south, terminating at the track. The horse racetrack is the most prominent and influential feature within the park; it is immediately encountered upon entering the stone gates from North Locust Street. Within the boundary of the track is located the athletic field (at the southeast portion of the track); the floral exhibition hall is in the near-center of the ring, and a small grouping of picnic tables is sited to the northwest of the floral pavilion. Along the exterior perimeter of the track are located three groupings of picnic tables; the playground is on the north exterior bank of the racetrack, and to its east is located the non-historic picnic shelter. The swimming pool is sited in the northeast corner of the park at West Division Avenue and North Locust Street. Throughout the park are remnants of historic tree plantings. Peabody City Park is a layered landscape that retains important components of its development from fairground to New Deal park to modern city park.

Fairgrounds-era Resources

Horse Racetrack (built 1876, contributing structure) 115-848

The half-mile racetrack is centrally located within the current park's boundaries, making it the park's primary organizing feature.¹ The track is kidney-shaped and roughly has a northwest-southeast axis, making the track longer than it is wide. The associated 2000-seat grandstand is no longer extant.

The entire ring of the track is still visible and usable. The track is cut out of the landscape, with the grassy banks sloping inward toward the racing bed on both sides. The *Peabody Gazette* from 23 June 1876 explains how the track was created, "It was first plowed very shallow. Then the turf [was] entirely removed." At its lowest level – along the northwest loop – the track is depressed approximately four feet below grade. The banks are most prominent along the north and west portions, starting approximately at the shelter house and continuing westward around the loop to the western bleachers of the athletic field. From this point east and

¹ William G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: Andreas Publishing Co., 1883). Accessed online at www.kancoll.org.

north around the track to the shelter, the track bed is extant, but the berm occurs only on the exterior perimeter. The track bed is composed of a small to medium sized gravel that accommodates both horses and vehicles.²

The track's width has shrunk during the life of the park. An article in the *Peabody Gazette* from 27 August 1885 mentions the Roman Chariot Races that occurred each fair day:

...there will be two handsome chariots, made in the style used during the great Roman dynasty many centuries ago. Each chariot will be drawn by four large and powerful horses, all abreast. One chariot will be occupied by a lady driver and the other by a gentleman...When the eight horses are all abreast, running at their highest speed, each team trying to take the lead and it is enough to – well – it's worth more than the entrance fee to see it.

The current width of the track only accommodates one vehicle spaciouly. The course is still evident, however, and horses are still allowed on it.

A mix of tree species demarcates the inner and outer perimeters of the track, including pines (*Pinus spp.*), cedars (*Juniperus spp.*), maples (*Acer spp.*), cottonwoods (*Populus spp.*), and sycamores (*Platanus spp.*).³ Along the inner perimeter, the 1937 site plan shows a "young elm grove" located to the north of the athletic field and extending west until the track begins to loop south. Today, not many elms (*Ulmus spp.*) remain, but cedars and pines have replaced them along the edges. Sycamores align the inner perimeter of the southwest portion of the track with pines and cedars planted along the outer perimeter at this location. Behind the sycamores to the northeast are groupings of maples.

Floral Exhibition Hall (built 1881, contributing building) 115-4410-00084

The Floral Exhibition Hall is located in the center of the park in the middle of the racetrack. It is an octagonal frame building with board-and-batten siding; it sits atop a concrete-coated stone foundation. The original floor was packed dirt; it is currently concrete. Each of the eight sides is approximately 16 feet, four inches in length, and the building has an approximate diameter of 36 feet. The eight-sectioned roof is covered in wood shakes with aluminum peak guards. The flat central portion of the roof is approximately four feet in diameter and contains a flagpole in the center.

The pavilion's eight sides alternate between doors and windows – four sides have doors; four sides have windows. The doors are large, double-width sliding barn doors with exterior tracks. Two four-over-four double-hung windows are centered in each of the window sections. The windows were constructed with solid shutters, which could be fastened over the windows. These removable shutters are kept in place to protect the historic windows.

The pavilion's interior is left unfinished, making the structural system easily identifiable. Each of the eight sections comprising the sides of the pavilion were likely constructed on the ground, raised into place, and connected to each other. A typical section's framing consists of a single square-profiled post at each corner connected by a single board top plate and sill plate. Two additional horizontal braces vertically divide the section into three parts, within which is framed the openings for the door or windows. An up-brace occurs on each end of the section where the upper horizontal brace and the post intersect. This system doubles the bracing strength at each of the eight corners of the pavilion. The siding's 12-inch boards and corresponding battens are applied directly to the exterior framing. Each section's top plate supports five full rafters and two bracing rafters that connect to a single rafter at the corners. These rafters connect to an octagonal ring at the

² A contemporary sign posted at the entry to the park states, "No horses on playground or athletic field," implying that horses are still allowed within the park and on the track.

³ Generalized common names are based on observation and are correlated, when possible, with the 1937 site plan. Exact species names were unknown to observers during site visit.

center of the roof, inside of which is a smaller set of rafters supporting the very middle of the roof under the flagpole.⁴ Eight down-braces connect from the long rafters to the center post.

New Deal-era Resources

Park Entrance Gate (built 1938, contributing structure)

Three simple square stone piers demarcate the main entrance into the park. At this location there are two asphalt driveways: the one on the north is the entry drive, and the one on the south is the exit. One stone pier, set within the eastern portion of a teardrop-shaped grassy island, separates the two drives. The north driveway heads west into the center of the racetrack, stopping near the floral exhibition hall.

The coursed ashlar piers are two feet wide by two feet deep and approximately six feet tall. The north and south piers have stone wing walls extending to the south (on the south pier) and to the north (on the north pier). These stone walls are three feet tall, two feet deep, and about five feet in length. The structures appear to be concrete with stone veneer and flat concrete coping stones. Two bar-steel truss metal gates are attached to the west side of the central pier and each swings on a large caster to block the driveways. A wooden stile-and-rail fence extends to the south of the southern pier. At the northern pier, a sidewalk separates the pier from a similar stile-and-rail fence to the north.

Athletic Field (built 1938, two contributing structures) 115-849

Newspapers from the early 1900s suggest baseball was played in the park as early as 1907,⁵ but the extant athletic field, a combination baseball and football field, was enhanced during the New Deal-era with stone bleachers behind home plate and parallel to the football field's western edge. The field is located in most of the eastern half of the land inside the racetrack and is roughly square in plan with the southeastern corner curved along the track's edge. The play area is sunken about six feet below the average park grade; the north and west edges have sloped grassy berms leading from the spectators' areas down to the playing field. The south and east edges – except at the bleachers – are at grade.

The baseball diamond is on the east portion of the field in the same location as it was in 1907. Home plate is located at the northeastern portion of the square field. An intact set of stone bleachers is located directly behind home plate. The shorter center portion of the bleachers is parallel with home plate; longer bleacher sections extend west and south, wrapping the north and east portions of center field. There are three rows of bleachers approximately one foot tall by two feet deep with contemporary plastic bench seats. A stepped stone end wall about four feet, six inches tall and two feet deep perpendicularly abuts the bleachers at the west and south ends of the three-sectioned stands. The bleachers are built into a man-made berm that abruptly slopes down to the racetrack on the east. An announcer's box, constructed of wood frame on a stone foundation, is incorporated into the north wall of the bleachers. Between the spectators' stands and behind home plate is a chain-link backstop. A stone wall runs along the north edge of the athletic field from the baseball bleachers to the west edge of the football field, periodically stepping up 20.5 inches with the grade as it heads west from the baseball diamond.

The football field is on the west side of the sports area, and its one goal post is located at the southern edge. Along its western perimeter and parallel to the football field are a stone wall and stone bleachers of similar construction to the baseball diamond's stands. These bleachers are located at the center of the field and contain five rows. The bottom three rows are 30 inches deep; the fourth row is 25 inches deep; all are one foot tall. The upper row is 12 feet deep and is comprised of a 35 inch deep row of stone behind which is a grassy area. All five rows have a contemporary plastic bench seat. Perpendicularly abutting the north and south ends of the bleachers is a stepped stone wall that at the south end is six feet, two inches tall. At the north end, a berm is built up next to the wall. A two-story, three bay frame announcer's box is located on the

⁴ According to Peabody resident and nomination sponsor Marilyn Jones, a mechanism for raising and lowering the flag from within the structure still exists, but the only groundskeeper who knew how to operate it died without sharing his knowledge.

⁵ *Peabody Gazette*, 18 July 1907.

west wall of the stone stands and has stone piers on the northeast and southeast corners. Extending south from the bleachers is a short stone wall.

The stonework on the bleachers themselves is coursed. The stonework on athletic field's perimeter walls and end walls of the bleachers is uncoursed ashlar. A concrete skim coat has been applied to the top of the walls.

Picnic Tables and Stoves (built 1938, 20 contributing objects – 15 tables; 3 stoves; 2 drinking fountains)

There are four picnic areas within the park. One is located at the northwest corner on the exterior bank of the track. This contains four regular sized tables and one stove. Another is inside the racetrack northwest of the floral exhibition hall and contains only three regular sized tables (no stove). A third is at the southeast corner of the park across the racetrack from the athletic field. This grouping contains a stove, drinking fountain, and five regular sized tables. West of the new shelter building, east of the playground on the north bank of the racetrack is a grouping of three extra long tables with a single stove.

The tables are a type combining masonry and wood.⁶ The benches are independent of the tables and are comprised of two rough, medium-sized stones for legs and a single board seat attached to the legs by steel straps. The tables were constructed by creating a rectangular uncoursed ashlar stone base and setting a thick, chamfered-edge wood or concrete slab on top.

The standard sizes of the tables during this era are explained in Albert Good's *Patterns of the Golden Age of Rustic Design*:

In general, the seat surface is 16 to 18 inches and the table surface 28 to 30 inches off the ground or floor, and the front edge of the seat is from one to three inches removed from the edge of the table. These dimensions have been held to in practically all successful picnic tables....⁷

The tables were eight feet long with the tops from 34 to 36 inches wide and the benches 12 inches wide.⁸ Peabody City Park's tables generally adhere to these measurements.

The stone stoves are also constructed of uncoursed ashlar stones and contain a single grill with stone chimney, forming an ell-shaped vertical section.

Historic Plantings

At this point, the dates of planting for some of the park's trees are indecipherable. This is in part due to the 1907 hiring of landscape gardener E. W. Stephens, who planned the creation of the city park from the fairgrounds. No known images or thorough descriptions exist to corroborate plantings; although, there is an 1885 reference to "five rows of thrifty cottonwoods"⁹ that were trimmed or replaced in 1907.¹⁰ Further, approximately 30 years later, the park was modified, this time by the Works Progress Administration. These later modifications to the park were documented, at least in planning form, on a site plan in 1937; however, any existing plantings at that time are not indicated on the plan. Finally, the large numbers of elm trees specified on the 1937 plan no longer exist, most likely being killed by Dutch Elm Disease in the mid-twentieth century. Though not as heavily wooded as the 1937 site plan indicates, dead and dying trees have been

⁶ Albert H. Good, *Patterns of the Golden Age of Rustic Design* (Lanham, MD: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1990 & 2003), Part II, 20-21.

⁷ Good, Part II, 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁹ *Kansas Farmer*, 9 September 1885.

¹⁰ *Peabody Gazette*, 18 July 1907.

replaced to maintain the designers' intents. This is particularly evident around the perimeter of the racetrack. As indicated on the 1937 plan, an Osage orange (*Maclura pomifera*) fencerow was planted in 1937 along the north and west edges of the park. Most of these trees are no longer extant, but their trunks were retained for fence posts and are still evident on site.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

Architecture

Period of Significance

1875-1961

Significant Dates

1881, 1900, 1937-38

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Aaron K. Stewart, architect/builder (Floral Hall)

E. W. Stephens, landscape gardener

Carroll Herbert, WPA construction foreman

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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins in 1875 with the property's first use as a fairground and ends in 1961 – fifty years prior to the date of nomination.

Criteria Considerations (justification)

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

The Peabody City Park is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of recreation/culture and under Criterion C in the area of architecture. It is nominated as part of the New Deal-Era Resources of Kansas multiple property submission for its association with the Works Progress Administration. The twenty-three acre park has a long and colorful history that began in the mid-1870s with its use as a fairgrounds owned by the Marion County Agricultural Society and later as a public park owned and maintained by the City of Peabody. New Deal-era labor enhanced the park in the 1930s with the construction of picnic facilities and ball field bleachers. Since the 1880s, this property on the west edge of town has hosted all kinds of community events including county fairs, a statewide fair in 1885, numerous Chautauqua in the early 1900s, and sporting events.

Elaboration

Marion County was organized in 1865, and the first settlement in Peabody Township came a few years later in 1870 in advance of the railroad that was developing through the area. Peabody was platted and filed in February of 1871. Peabody was named in honor of F. H. Peabody, a former president of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe (ATSF) Railroad Company. By 1883 when William Cutler's *History of the State of Kansas* was published, Peabody had "three hotels, two banks, four drug stores, seven general stores, one flour and feed store, two meat markets, four blacksmith shops, four real estate agencies, three lumber dealers, etc."¹¹ Peabody became the junction of two rail lines – the ATSF and Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific – and by 1912 large shipments of hogs and cattle were leaving from the area. The town had grown to over 1,400 in 1910.¹²

Kansas settlers began organizing local agricultural societies almost as soon as a community was established, and those who settled in the Peabody area were no different. A state agricultural society formed before the Civil War, but the Kansas Legislature replaced it with a public board, the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, in 1872. This board published annual reports with data on the counties beginning in 1876. This activity on the state level coincided with the creation of the Marion County Agricultural Society in 1873, which began hosting annual fairs each October.

Historian Cathy Ambler's research suggests "pre-1900 fairs were not democratic institutions of farmer education," but rather "they were the domain of town boosters and stock breeders."¹³ She continues by explaining that

...through the state's business incorporation laws booster groups invested in fairs by tapping their own personal resources. Although stock holders never anticipated much return on their investment, they did expect fair income to cover operating expenses. These corporations produced income in a variety of ways: admission, stall rentals, entrant fees for horse racing and livestock, and rent for midway and concessionaires' use of ground space.¹⁴

Additionally, Ambler notes that "state law allowed county agricultural societies to organize as stock corporations," and they "raised capital by selling shares." This model of organization, Ambler contends,

¹¹ Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas*.

¹² Frank Blackmar, *Kansas: A Cyclopedia of State History, vol. 2* (Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1912), 457-458. Accessed online at: <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/archives/1912/p/peabody.html>.

¹³ Cathy J. Ambler, "Look of the Fair: Kansas County Fairs, 1854-1994, vol. 1-2" Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1996), 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

ensured agricultural societies would “remain in the hands of those who had the time and money to invest in them.” As a result, most stockholders were usually local merchants, businessmen, and landowners.¹⁵

The Marion County Agricultural Society mirrors Ambler’s description of early agricultural associations in Kansas. In 1873, less than ten years after the county organized, the Marion County Agricultural Society formed under the leadership of T. C. Thoburn, president; A. H. Lackey, secretary; G. W. Campbell, treasurer; A. O. Chenault, and O. Tomblinson. Records indicate at least three board members were well-connected businessmen with agricultural interests. Campbell, for instance, operated a lumberyard in Peabody, was a dealer in grains and stock, owned one-third interest in Peabody Flouring Mills, and was elected to the Kansas Legislature in 1876. Lackey, who was listed in the 1880 federal census as a lawyer, was also a cattle breeder.¹⁶ Thoburn was listed as a coal merchant in an 1889 regional directory and the 1900 federal census.

The group hosted its first fair in the fall of 1875, and a local newspaper noted that the next fair would be held at the society’s “new and elegant fair grounds” the following October. By the following June, the *Peabody Gazette* was reporting on the progress of the development of the fairgrounds noting that work on the fairground track had been underway for several days.

It was first plowed very shallow. Then the turf is to be entirely removed. A fine driving course will soon be in readiness, when all who have the conveniences are invited to give the track thorough and repeated trials.¹⁷

As the racetrack was being completed, plans were underway for the first race to take place during that year’s fair. There would be a running race, a slow mule race, and a trotting race.¹⁸ Later, the paper reported that there were seven competitors in the ladies’ equestrian event, and that the “first premium was awarded to Miss Effie Smith; second premium to Miss Mary Lackey.”¹⁹

Ambler’s study of “fairsapes” notes that mid- to late-nineteenth century agricultural societies “preferred permanent buildings to tents and they frequently went into debt to build them.”²⁰ Throughout July and August of 1876, the Marion County Agricultural Society requested donations for the purchase of their stock so that fair buildings could be erected before the fair was to begin in early October.²¹ Although the racetrack was completed by mid-September 1876, it is not clear what other fair facilities were erected and when. However, the annual reports of the State Agricultural Board Reports 1876 through 1878 all mention the “valuable fair grounds, with living water, good track and good buildings” at Peabody.²²

Only one building from the fairgrounds era is extant – the Floral Exhibition Hall. This octagon-shaped building was designed and built by Aaron K. Stewart for \$540 in September 1881. The *Peabody Gazette* described every step of the building’s planning and construction noting, “The new building is to be octagon shape with alternate doors and windows in each square.”²³ The building was to be completed just in time for the annual local fair in early October.

¹⁵ Ibid., 84.

¹⁶ *The American Short-Horn Herd Book, Containing Pedigrees of Short-Horn Cattle, Vol. xxvi, Part II - Cows* (Chicago: The American Short-Horn Breeders’ Association, 1884), 887.

¹⁷ *Peabody Gazette*, 23 June 1876.

¹⁸ *Peabody Gazette*, 30 June 1876.

¹⁹ *Peabody Gazette*, 13 October 1876.

²⁰ Ambler, 124.

²¹ *Peabody Gazette*, 4 August 1876.

²² *First Biennial Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture to the Legislature of the State, for the Years 1876-1878* (Topeka: Kansas, 1879).

²³ *Peabody Gazette*, 5 August 1881; 12 August 1881. Aaron K. Stewart is also credited with building the Hopkins Building at 117 Walnut in downtown Peabody.

The fairground was likely mostly complete by the early 1880s. The Marion County Agricultural Society and community of Peabody hosted their largest event to date in 1885 when the Kansas state fair came to town. During the early 1880s, the state fair had primarily taken place in Topeka, but other communities such as Lawrence and Leavenworth had hosted it in years prior to 1886. Perhaps one reason Peabody and the Marion County Agricultural Society hosted the event was because one Kansas State Agriculture Board Member – Thomas M. Potter – was from Peabody. Potter was a stock dealer and his farmstead east of Peabody included an orchard with 2,500 fruit trees.²⁴

By this time, a grandstand capable of accommodating 2,000 people had been erected. Hotels and restaurants prepared for the anticipated crowd of 10,000, and for this two train-carloads of tables, cooking utensils, and people to prepare meals were brought in. The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad even offered special rates for passengers and freight to and from Peabody for the event.²⁵

One of the more interesting events at the state fair was the “Roman Chariot Races,” which took place each day of the fair and included “two handsome chariots” each “drawn by four large and powerful horses, all abreast.”²⁶ In addition to the chariot races, the September 3, 1885 issue of the *Peabody Gazette* was devoted to complete coverage of the upcoming fair listing premiums, housing and food preparations, descriptions of the displays, and information about the newly erected U.S. Grant monument (which is no longer extant).

The agricultural society continued to host county fairs at the property – in 1886, 1887, and 1892. Likely due to difficulty in fundraising and maintaining the buildings, the society decided by 1895 to discontinue hosting fairs. The property was sold less than ten years later, in 1902, to the City of Peabody for \$1500.²⁷ Again, the *Peabody Gazette* covered city council discussions about the fairgrounds property during the two years leading up to this purchase. A park board was established in early 1900 to oversee the transfer and maintenance of the property.²⁸ To help raise funds for the purchase of the property, the board “found two beds of good sand on the bank of Spring Branch in the park, and will have it dug out and sold for the benefit of the park fund...Much sand will be used in Peabody this summer for building purposes and a large amount of brick and cement sidewalks.”²⁹

A lengthy article in the July 25, 1907 issue of the *Peabody Gazette* recalled the recent transformation of the park from fairgrounds to public park and gives an excellent snapshot of the park at that time:

A landscape gardener E. W. Stephens, was employed who, with the efficient co-operation of Messrs. Clark, Wheeler, Bonesteel, Moffett and Nusbaum planned the park as it is today. The old racetrack was left as it was, the old cottonwoods were trimmed and the dying ones removed, the ones left taking a new lease of life to last until the new trees set take their places. The old barns and sheds, where the prize stock of the county was tied with blue ribbons, were taken down and sold as old lumber, bringing over \$400 into the treasury...A thousand forest trees, mostly elms, were set, under the supervision of Mr. Hanson, a nurseryman of the town. Groups of evergreens of many varieties, were placed to the best advantage and a few beds of flowering shrubs added to brighten the whole...the city has always taken a great pride in its park, many individuals setting clumps of trees and shrubs...The second year of the park's history proved one of those 'dry seasons' and it was necessary to water the trees, but out of all the trees set only forty-seven have died...The Tuesday Afternoon Club presented six bent-wood settees, and the Twentieth Century Club provided tables and benches sufficient to seat one hundred persons, to use at picnics. The business firm of Tucker and Griffiths presented six settees for use in the park. Rope swings were hung and six large platform swings capable of seating twenty-four persons have been

²⁴ Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas*.

²⁵ Sondra Van Meter, *Marion County, Kansas, Past and Present* (Hillsboro, KS: MB Publishing House, 1972).

²⁶ *Peabody Gazette*, 27 August 1885.

²⁷ Warranty Deed, (Signed February 4, 1902 and filed March 10, 1902) Marion County Register of Deeds.

²⁸ *Peabody Gazette*, 15 February 1900.

²⁹ *Peabody Gazette*, 10 May 1900; Peabody City Council minutes for 6 February 1900.

erected...The extent of the grounds has made it possible to have a fine base ball diamond, and the gun club find it the best place for their sport...In the mind of the landscape gardener employed, an ideal place for an artificial lake was found. A dam was built and a good beginning made and although the lake is not yet a brilliant success it is believed by many that it will be in time, and even now it affords a safe and enjoyable skaking [sic] place in winter for the youngsters of the town...The old race track is kept in fine condition by the horsemen of the town and affords a magnificent riding and driving course, which is greatly appreciated by the public.

Of course today's Peabody park does not include a dam or pond for skating, and it is not clear where this feature may have been.

The year 1907 also was the first year the community hosted a Chautauqua in the park. The Chautauqua movement was gaining momentum in rural Kansas communities in the early 1900s. These events, which featured musicians, religious and political lectures, singers, storytellers, and theatrical performances, were often held at the local fairgrounds under a giant tent or pavilion. Typically, attendees could purchase a ticket for the day's programs or for the entire multi-day event, and "by the time the week was over, audiences returned home feeling uplifted, refreshed, spirited and energetic."³⁰

Peabody's first Chautauqua was held in "an immense tent" erected at the northeast corner of the park where the "natural sloping floor" provided a good view of the stage. Performances included music, readings, and dramatics, and the newspaper reported 1,600 attendees for one performance and over 900 "season tickets" sold for the almost two-week event.³¹ A second Chautauqua was held the following year from July 22 to August 1. After the second annual event, the newspaper reported that the "financial success" of the event was "confirmation that it has more than been worth while."³²

A survey of later issues of the *Peabody Gazette* suggest the annual Chautauqua continued through at least 1920, when politician and Chautauqua-circuit favorite William Jennings Bryan was a featured speaker.³³ It's not clear if any other Chautauquas were held in the park, but sporting events in the park – particularly baseball games – were regularly advertised in the newspaper throughout the 1910s and 1920s.

1922 is the first year the city park is noted on a Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Peabody, and interestingly, the map also refers to the property as a "tourist camp." The only other historical reference to camping in the park was associated with the Chautauqua when attendees from a distance camped at the park.³⁴

The New Deal era brought renewal to the Peabody City Park. Plans were drafted in July of 1937 for improvements to the park that included a new baseball field with a small grandstand and a football field with stone bleachers.³⁵ The local newspaper reported on April 7, 1938 that city officials had received word that work on the WPA project in the park was to begin the next week. The article reported that the project of building baseball and football fields had been in the making for almost a year.³⁶ By the end of the month, the project was "well under way" under the supervision of construction foreman Carroll Herbert. WPA labor was used for the park improvements, and the city furnished the materials – most of which included native stone.³⁷

³⁰ Robert A. McInness, "Chautauqua: The Most American Thing in America" *Kansas Heritage* 5:3 (Autumn 1997): 10-11. See also: W. Stitt Robinson, "Chautauqua: Then and Now" *Kansas History* 22 (Summer 1999): 132-141.

³¹ *Peabody Gazette*, 25 July 1907.

³² *Peabody Gazette*, 3 August 1908.

³³ *Peabody Gazette-Herald*, 5 August 1920.

³⁴ *Peabody Gazette*, 25 July 1907.

³⁵ The drawings are currently framed and hanging on the wall of the Peabody City Council chamber.

³⁶ *Peabody Gazette-Herald*, 7 April 1938.

³⁷ *Peabody Gazette-Herald*, 28 April 1938.

By late spring of 1939, the park was “looking fine” with its new athletic fields, bleachers, and picnic units.³⁸ These park improvements reflect typical rustic park architecture common among New Deal-era park buildings and structures. They used natural, local materials to complete this labor-intensive project.

Throughout the 20th century, the property has continued to function as a public park hosting events, gatherings, and athletic competitions. The local schools have used the athletic fields for practice and competition. Today, the park generally reflects the appearance from when the 1930s improvements were completed. It reflects continued development from its earliest days as a fairground to its origins as a city park at the turn of the 20th century to a New Deal-era landscaped park complete with athletic fields, bleachers, and picnic areas.

³⁸ *Peabody Gazette-Herald*, 1 June 1939.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Van Meter, Sondra. *Marion County, Kansas, Past and Present*. Hillsboro, KS: MB Publishing House, 1972.

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: **Kansas Historical Society**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): __N/A__

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 23.16 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

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

1	<u>14</u> Zone	<u>665045</u> Easting	<u>4225840</u> Northing	3	<u>14</u> Zone	<u>665390</u> Easting	<u>4225570</u> Northing
2	<u>14</u> Zone	<u>665380</u> Easting	<u>4225845</u> Northing	4	<u>14</u> Zone	<u>665040</u> Easting	<u>4225560</u> Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The Peabody City Park is a 23.16-acre parcel at the west end of 2nd street. It is located in Section 4, Township 22, Range 03 and is described as follows: PRT SW/4 BEG NW/C E1089' TO W LI LOCUST ST S 948.75' TO POB LESS ROW 96/623.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The 23.16-acre boundary encompasses all the land and features historically associated with the city park parcel.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marilyn Jones (Sarah Martin & Amanda Loughlin, KSHS)

organization Peabody Historical Society date September 2011

street & number 1556 E 59th Street telephone _____

city or town Peabody state KS zip code 66866

e-mail _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Historic images, maps, etc.)

Photographs:

Name of Property: Peabody City Park
City or Vicinity: Peabody
County/State: Marion County, KS
Photographer: Sarah Martin
Date of Photos: 23 February 2011

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 1 of 17 Entrance to Park, facing W
- 2 of 17 Racetrack/roadway just inside the entrance, facing W
- 3 of 17 Racetrack/roadway on left and playground on right, facing NW
- 4 of 17 Racetrack/roadway on left and playground on right, facing W
- 5 of 17 Athletic fields on left and floral hall on right, facing S
- 6 of 17 Northwest curve of racetrack/roadway with picnic tables on right, facing W
- 7 of 17 Picnic tables along east edge of park, facing E
- 8 of 17 Picnic area at northwest corner of park, facing NW
- 9 of 17 Baseball bleachers along north side of baseball field, facing E
- 10 of 17 Football field and bleachers, facing S
- 11 of 17 Baseball field and bleachers (at far left), facing E
- 12 of 17 Baseball bleachers along north side of baseball field, facing W
- 13 of 17 Floral Exhibition Hall, facing NW
- 14 of 17 Floral Exhibition Hall, facing NE
- 15 of 17 Interior of Floral Exhibition Hall showing roof framing
- 16 of 17 Interior of Floral Exhibition Hall showing four-over-four wood-frame windows
- 17 of 17 WPA proposed plan for park dated July 1937, Peabody City Hall

Property Owner:

(complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name City of Peabody (C/O Mac Manning)

street & number 300 N Walnut telephone _____

city or town Peabody state KS zip code 66866

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Figure 1: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Peabody, Kansas (1930).

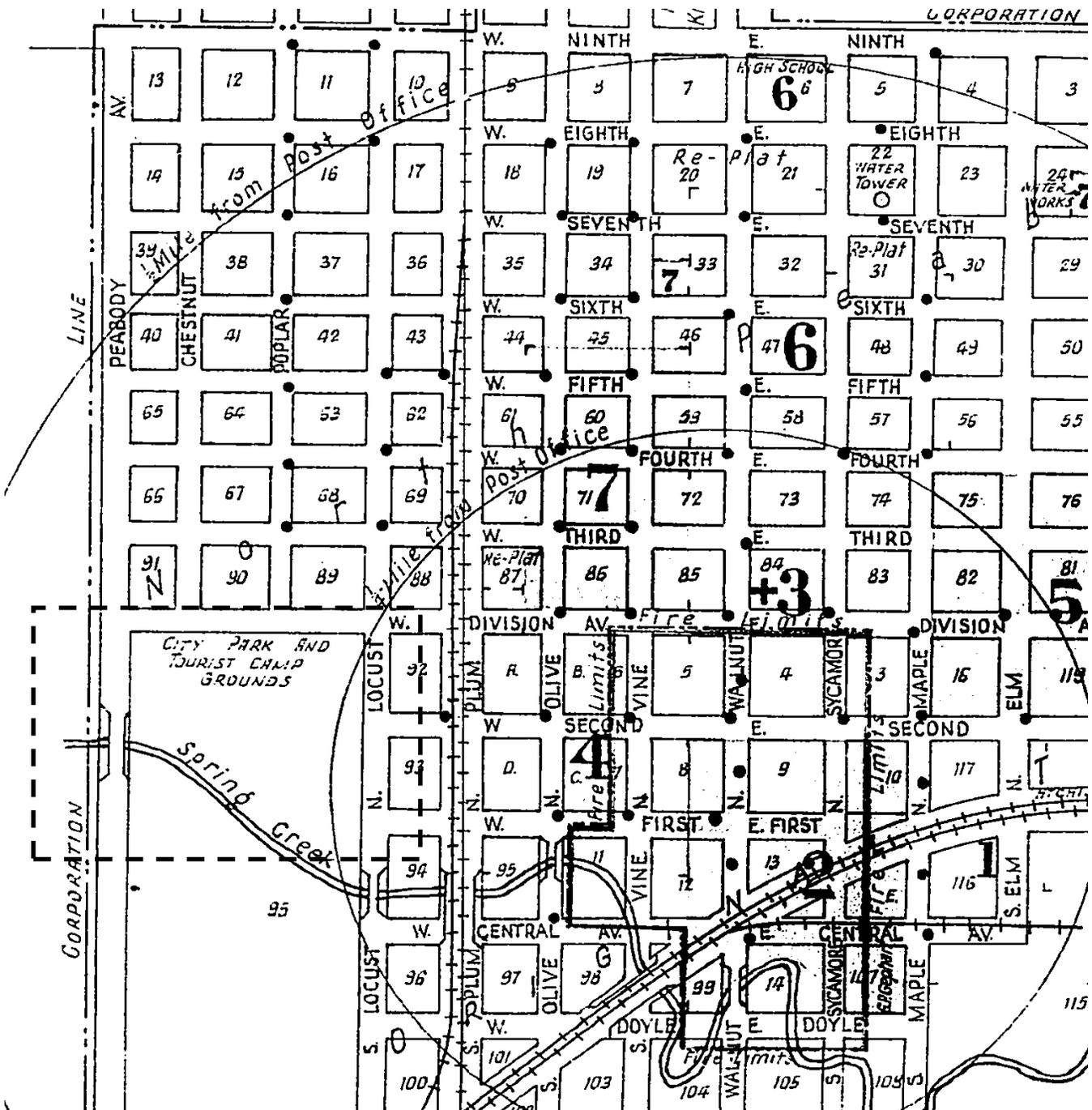


Figure 2: Park Site Plan, 2011.

