

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER
LISTED

FEB 17 2009

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 *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 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Fowler Swimming Pool and Bathhouse
Other name/site number _____

2. Location

Street & number 308 E. 6th not for publication
City or town Fowler vicinity
State Kansas Code KS County Meade Code 119 Zip code 67844

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.)

Patricia Jelmer DSHPO

1-2-09

Signature of certifying official/Title
Kansas State Historical Society

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 commenting 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 _____
- other, (explain:) _____

Fowler Swimming Pool and Bathhouse
Name of Property

Meade County, Kansas
County and State

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	1	buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
2	1	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 AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Moderne

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: Concrete

Walls: Concrete

Roof: ASPHALT

Other:

Narrative Description

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

Fowler Swimming Pool and Bathhouse

Name of Property

Meade County, Kansas

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1936-1958

Significant Dates

1936-37

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Charles W. Suit (engineer)

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):

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, etc.

Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- Location checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State agency, etc.

Name of repository:

Fowler Swimming Pool and Bathhouse
Name of Property

Meade County, Kansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	4	3	9	4	4	8	0	4	1	3	8	0	5	4
Zone		Easting						Northing						

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 Christy Davis

Organization Davis Preservation Date August 10, 2008

Street & number 909 1/2 Kansas Ave, Suite 7 Telephone 785-234-5053

City or town Topeka State KS Zip code 66612

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 SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Name City Clerk, City of Fowler

Street & number 508 Main Telephone (620) 646-5231

City or town Fowler State KS Zip code 67844

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

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*Fowler Pool and Bathhouse
Meade County, Kansas*

Section number 7 Page 1

Narrative Description

Setting

The Fowler Swimming Pool is located in Fowler, Kansas (population 567), a community located in the northeast corner of Meade County in southwest Kansas. Fowler is situated along the banks of Crooked Creek, a tributary of the Cimarron River, notorious as the namesake for the treacherous Cimarron Cutoff on the Santa Fe Trail, in the Artesian Valley of Meade County. The Fowler Swimming Pool and Bathhouse are located in the Fowler City Park, which covers two city blocks between Walnut and Kansas Streets and 7th and 6th Streets. The pool and bathhouse are on the east half of the westernmost block. The block to the east houses a baseball diamond.

The nominated property includes the swimming pool (structure, contributing), bathhouse (building, contributing), and modern restroom building (building, non-contributing)

Swimming Pool

The swimming pool is a reinforced concrete oval structure measuring 90' from north to south and 120' from east to west. The pool is symmetrical along the north/south axis of the bathhouse. According to historic accounts, the oval shape was inspired by a similar pool in the nearby town of Satanta, Kansas.

The pool's shallow ring, which circles the deeper diving area, is accessible via two stairs on the side of the bathhouse. These stairs have metal pipe railings. A continuous gutter rings the pool's perimeter. The pool is surrounded by a historic concrete deck, which follows its oval pattern. A chain-link fence, which also follows an oval pattern, surrounds the deck.

The pool is deepest in the center, where the diving area is located. The diving area is marked by a reinforced-concrete diving platform, which rises above the water from the pool floor. The area is cordoned off by a simple rope, anchored by metal pipes that, like the platform, rise from the floor. On the perimeter of the diving area, also rising from the pool floor, is a metal pipe lifeguard's stand.

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*Fowler Pool and Bathhouse
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Bathhouse

The bathhouse, which lies south of the pool, is a one-story reinforced concrete structure with rectangular massing and a wood-framed roof. It measures 60'-8" from east to west and 20'-4" from north to south. Like the pool, the bathhouse is symmetrical along a north/south axis. The office, which occupies the building's central bay, is flanked by dressing rooms on each side.

The bathhouse is accessed via entrances in the south elevation's centered bay. This bay houses an original 16-pane steel window flanked by two entrances – a women's entrance on the west and a men's entrance on the east. Once entering these doors, patrons access their respective dressing rooms via 4' wide north/south halls that flank the office. On their way in, patrons pay their admission fee through one of two small cased openings on the east and west walls of the office.

The office, which measures 12' X 11', is lit by a multi-pane steel window on its south side. It may be accessed via an exterior door on the north elevation or interior door on the west wall. The dressing rooms each measure 19'-10" X 19'-4". Each is a large open space, with the exception of a 5' X 5' restroom. The building was designed to facilitate the hygiene of bathers; exiting the dressing rooms required swimmers to walk through showers, located north of the office and a footbath.

Restroom Building

A non-historic concrete-block restroom building lies west of the historic bathhouse. This building is rectangular with a gabled roof that runs north to south. There are two doors on each of its two gabled ends – providing access to men's and women's restrooms from both the pool and the adjacent park. A metal roof, which provides a shaded area southwest of the pool, extends north from the building's north elevation. This building has a composite roof. East of the restroom building, between the restroom building and the bathhouse, are the pumps for the swimming pool. A chain-link fence separates the pumps from the pool deck.

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*Fowler Pool and Bathhouse
Meade County, Kansas*

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Statement of Significance

Introduction

The Fowler Swimming Pool and Bathhouse is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the New Deal under the Multiple Property Nomination *New Deal-Era Resources of Kansas* as an example of the "Social and Recreational Facilities" Property Type.

A Brief History of Fowler, Kansas

Fowler, Kansas was founded in 1884 when stockman George Fowler (ca. 1851-1888) platted eighty acres of his land for a town site.¹ To attract businesses to his town and provide them necessary capital, Mr. Fowler offered free lots for business owners and founded a bank. Soon, Fowler boasted a store, lumberyard, printing office, drugstore, and restaurant. Despite Mr. Fowler's best efforts, the nearby town of Meade beat out Fowler as county seat in 1885.²

However, the town's fate seemed to take an upturn in 1887, when the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Rail Line, known as the "Rock Island," reached Fowler. Established in 1869, the Rock Island Railroad stretched west from Illinois through Kansas along two routes, a northwest route through Colby and a southwest route through Liberal. The Rock Island laid the majority of its track in 1887 and 1888, when its mileage peaked at just over 1000 miles.³

Despite its rail proximity, Fowler suffered the fate of many southwest Kansas towns during the waning years of the nineteenth century. Once prized by bison hunters and stockmen as fine rangeland, southwest Kansas towns came to be promoted as farmland by railroads and speculators. Soon the region was filled with settlers living in sod houses fueled with cow chips.

¹The town of Maple Hill, also a Rock Island Town, was founded by George Fowler in 1882. Although this could not be confirmed, it is believed that the same George Fowler may have founded both towns.

²Centennial Book Committee, *Centennial Book, 1884-1984* (Fowler, 1984).

³Deon Wolfenbarger, *Historic Railroad Resources of Kansas* (Kansas State Historical Society, 2000).

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Even elaborate irrigation schemes, which included 140' deep hand-dug wells, could not save the resultant boomtowns from the railroad overexpansion, blizzards, drought and foreclosures that plagued the late 1880s. The town's decline accelerated following the untimely death of its founder George Fowler in 1888. In 1889, the town's first newspaper, *Fowler City Graphic*, ceased publication. In 1890, the first bank, which George Fowler had founded, closed its doors.

Advances in agricultural technology, including the use of internal combustion engines to dig deep wells and windmills to pump water from them, improved irrigation and, thereby, the prospects for farming in western Kansas. Between 1900 and 1910, Fowler's population grew from 253 to 1073.⁴ By 1920, there were over 95,000 acres of Kansas land under irrigation.⁵ Fowler was re-incorporated in 1908. By 1912, the town boasted "3 banks, an international money order post office with two rural routes, telegraph and express offices, grain elevators, lumber yard, a number of stocked mercantile establishments, a weekly newspaper (the *Gazette*), Congregational, Friends [Quaker] and Methodist churches, good schools, hotel, etc."⁶

According to local news reports, Fowler residents began agitating for a swimming pool in about 1920, when its population peaked. Although Fowler's population has halved since then, the town remains a trading center for the surrounding agricultural community.

Swimming Pools and the WPA

Although swimming pools date back to Roman times, they did not become popular in the United States until the early twentieth century, after swimming was featured in the first modern Olympic Games in 1896. Many of the nation's first pools were private. During the 1910s and 1920s, swimming pools were built by a growing number of country clubs, including the Wichita Country Club, which built a pool in conjunction with its new clubhouse in 1913.⁷

⁴ 1900 U. S. Census; 1910 U. S. Census.

⁵ Kansas State Historical Society, "Topics in Kansas History: Irrigation."

⁶ "Fowler," Frank Blackmar, *Kansas: a cyclopedia of state history, embracing events, institutions, industries, counties, cities, towns, prominent persons, etc.* (Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1912).

⁷ Mayo, James M., *The American Country Club: Its Origins and Development* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 105-106.

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Fowler Pool and Bathhouse
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Although the elite had access to country-club pools, the majority of swimmers remained relegated to ponds and streams. The nation's first municipal pool, Boston's Cabot Street Bath, opened in 1868. In Kansas, some larger communities built public pools in the 1920s. But few Kansas towns had the resources necessary to build public pools.

This all changed, however, during the Great Depression when dozens of communities partnered with the New Deal's Works Progress Administration (WPA) to construct community pools. The Fowler Swimming Pool was one of forty Kansas pools improved or constructed by the WPA between July 1935 and June 1939.⁸ By 1939, the WPA had completed the construction of pools in Abilene, Coffeyville, Concordia, Englewood, Fowler, Garden City, Hays, Herington, Holton, Hugoton, Iola, Kingman, Leavenworth, Pittsburg, Protection, Sublette, Ulysses, Wellington, and Wichita; and construction had begun on pools in Colby, Ellis, Garnett, Hoxie, and Marysville.

WPA Swimming pools were generally located in public parks adjacent to other recreational facilities such as bandstands and baseball diamonds. Such facilities became essential in assuaging the uneasiness of American citizens, who faced increasing stretches of leisure time during the Great Depression.⁹ Public swimming pools provided families an escape from summer heat in the days before air conditioning.

Municipal pools were tremendous public resources. However, not all members of the public could use them. As segregated facilities, public swimming pools played a central role in the early days of the Civil Rights movement. In the years before the landmark Supreme Court Case *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* struck down the "separate but equal" doctrine established in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, blacks fought to have access to equal public amenities. In 1934, Newton, Kansas NAACP president Samuel Ridley asked the city, which had just passed a \$30,000 swimming pool bond, to build a second pool for blacks. To avoid integrating the new pool or building a second pool, the City of Newton leased the pool to a private citizen who refused to admission to blacks.

With the help of Topeka Civil Rights attorney Elisha Scott, Ridley filed suit on behalf of swimmer D. E. Kern. In its 1940 decision, the Kansas Supreme Court fell short of ruling that the City had violated the plaintiff's Civil Rights. However, it ruled that the City could not avoid its legal

⁸ MPS, 20.

⁹ Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 9.

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Fowler Pool and Bathhouse
Meade County, Kansas

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responsibilities by leasing the pool. Although the case did not settle the pool segregation issue, it set the stage for future pool desegregation cases.¹⁰ When the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibited discrimination in public facilities, including swimming pools, white elites in larger towns and cities swam at country clubs, which remained segregated. Even in smaller towns, air conditioning made swimming less essential in beating the summer heat.

The Fowler Swimming Pool and Bathhouse

On Black Sunday, April 14, 1935, 60-mile-per-hour winds swept tons of dirt over western Kansas, further exacerbating the plight of plains farmers, who had already lost millions of acres of wheat in recent windstorms. When the dust cleared, rural communities like Fowler were desperate for any aid they could get for their downtrodden citizens. Fowler's fathers could not improve the climate of the "dirty thirties" – but they could offer some relief to the community's demoralized citizens with the help of new government relief programs. Among the projects the City of Fowler sponsored was the construction of a municipal pool, applying for aid from the recently established Works Progress Administration (WPA) Program in May 1935.

When the *Fowler News* announced on Thursday November 14, 1935 that the WPA had approved the project (although the federal funds had not yet been allocated), Fowler's citizens caught their first glimmer of hope that the community would recover. The project promised to provide not only a new recreational facility, but also much-needed jobs for the area's unemployed men. At the time of the project's announcement, the WPA provided jobs for 82 Meade County residents, most employed in the construction of an Oklahoma bridge, 40 miles from Fowler. If these workers could be re-assigned closer to home, they could complete the pool in time for summer.

Unfortunately, despite the community's commitment, the project was beset by "unforeseen" delays. Local officials and boosters lobbied the state WPA administrator Evan Griffith to increase the county's quota of WPA jobs, "as many men, who are not now employed are in dire need of work."¹¹ Apparently, these attempts were unsuccessful. When local men were re-located, they were assigned to work on Fowler's road gravel project.¹² The pool project was further delayed when local officials were "unable to locate the proper kind of sand" for its construction.

¹⁰ Jeff Wilste, *Contested waters: a social history of swimming pools in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 147-168.

¹¹ *Fowler News*, 14 November 1935.

¹² *Ibid.*, 12 March 1936.

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On Wednesday, March 11, city officials announced that the project would finally begin "within the next week or ten days," and be completed by July 1.¹³ It was then that city officials announced that the project would "include the latest features in swimming pool construction" and would be "built in an oval shape similar to that of Satanta," a community approximately 60 miles from Fowler that completed a pool in 1934.¹⁴ The Fowler pool, which was designed by Garden City engineer Charles W. Suit, would measure 90' X 120', with an 8' deep center for diving.

The project finally began on Saturday, March 21, 1936 when the WPA transferred men and equipment from the township's road project. The men worked under the supervision of foreman John Sullivan, a Meade resident who had been employed as a hotel clerk before the Great Depression. The *Fowler News* optimistically announced that the pool would be completed in three months – with workers rushing to complete the pool before beginning work on the bathhouse so the pool could be used that summer.

The time estimate proved overly ambitious as the construction phase, like the planning phase, was beset with delays. Although there were as many as 40 men working on the pool at a time, "at various times men were taken off the job to work in farm work." The pool was not completed until November 1936.¹⁵ According to the *Fowler News*, the city planned to keep water in the pool that first winter, when it would "perhaps be used ... for ice skating." The pool and bathhouse were completed at a total cost of \$13,000. The city funded its share, which totaled approximately \$3000, through revenue from the water department.

The community would have to wait until summer for the pool's formal opening, which like everything else associated with the project, was also delayed. By early June, over 60 people had volunteered to serve on the 12 committees that would plan the opening celebration.¹⁶ When the June 15, 1937 event was rained out, the planners were undeterred, announcing that they would host a "bigger and better" event after the wheat harvest in July. More than 1000 people came to the July 20 event, which featured a horseshoe tournament, dinner, contests, baseball games, a band concert, a water polo game, and a water carnival with "a large number of fancy divers and swimmers." In addition, there was a lifesaving demonstration by Fowler's new senior lifeguard Wesley Burford.¹⁷

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid; Ibid, 19 March 1936.

¹⁵ Ibid., 26 November 1936.

¹⁶ Ibid., 3 June 1937.

¹⁷ Ibid., 27 May 1937; 3 June 1937; 10 June 1937; 17 June 1937; 24 June 1937; 15 July 1937; 22 July 1937.

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Fowler Pool and Bathhouse
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In the early years, the pool was managed by A. S. Miller. The original admission fee was set at 10 cents for adults and 5 cents for children, with revenues used for the pool's maintenance. In order to ensure the pool's long-term maintenance and public safety, the Fowler City Council adopted an ordinance that established fines for violators who defaced or unlawfully entered the pool.¹⁸

The Fowler Swimming Pool has served the community for seven decades.

Registration Requirements

New Deal-Era Resources of Kansas identifies registration requirements for resources nominated under the Multiple Property Submission. To be eligible under the MPS, resources must have been constructed by New Deal Programs and retain integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Like most New Deal-Era resources, the Fowler Swimming Pool and Bathhouse retain their simple design, with clean lines reflective of Art Deco and Art Moderne trends. In addition, they retain their original materials, such as reinforced concrete, and workmanship.

Summary

The Fowler Swimming Pool and Bathhouse is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places for its association with the New Deal under the Multiple Property Nomination *New Deal-Era Resources of Kansas* as an example of the "Social and Recreational Facilities" Property Type.

¹⁸ Fowler City Ordinance no. 122.

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Fowler Pool and Bathhouse
Meade County, Kansas

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Bibliography

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Leeuwen, Thomas. *The Springboard in the Pond: an intimate history of the swimming pool.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998.

McKay, Robert B. "Segregation and Public Recreation." *Virginia Law Review.* V. 40, no. 6 (October 1954), 697-731.

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Wolfenbarger, Deon. *Historic Railroad Resources of Kansas, Multiple Property Submission Form.* Kansas State Historical Society, 2000.

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Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

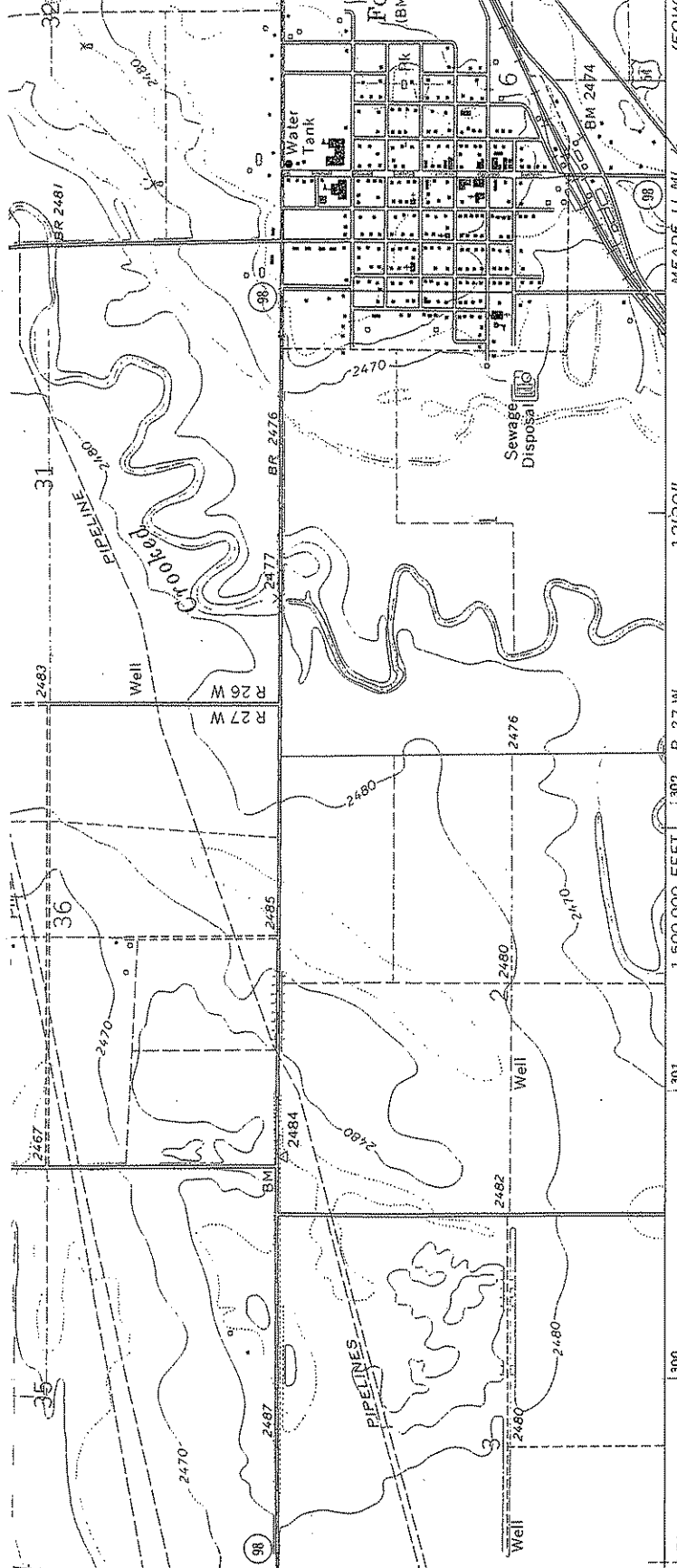
The nominated property lies in the city park in an roughly bound on the north by 7th Street, south by 6th Street, west by Walnut, and east by the north/south drive that runs between the baseball diamond on the east and pool on the west. More specifically, the nominated property is bounded on the north by an east/west line 20 feet north of the east/west line that runs tangent to the northernmost point of the sidewalk surrounding the pool; on the south by a line 20 feet south of the east/west line of the south elevation of the historic bathhouse; on the east by a line 20 feet east of the north/south line tangent to the easternmost point of the sidewalk surrounding the pool; and on the west by a line 20 feet west of the north/south line that follows the line of the west elevation of the non-historic restroom building that lies west of the historic bathhouse.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the land on which the swimming pool and bathhouse sits, as well as a twenty-foot perimeter around them.

Photo Log

1. Exterior, South Elevation of Bathhouse, Looking North.
2. Exterior, North Elevation of Bathhouse and Pool, Looking South.
3. Exterior, North Elevations of Bathhouse and Restroom Building and Pool, Looking Southwest.
4. Exterior, North Elevation of Bathhouse and Pool, Looking Southeast.
5. Exterior, West Elevation of Bathhouse, Looking Southeast.
6. Exterior, Pool and Diving Platform, Looking Northeast.
7. Exterior, Pool and Lifeguard's Platform, Looking Northwest.
8. Interior, Close-up of Reinforced Concrete Construction.
9. Interior, Office, Showing door and Admission Window (typical east and west walls).
10. Interior, Built-in Storage Cabinet in Hall Between Office/Admission Window and Men's Locker Room on East, Looking North.



270 000
FEET
4139
T. 30 S.
5 MI. TO KANS. 23

Fowler Swimming
Pool + Bathhouse
N: 3N4480 E
4130 054 N

T. 31 S.

37° 22' 30" W
100° 15' W
(MEADE) 1 SE 1/4 15 E

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

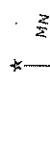
Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1969
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Kansas coordinate system, south zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 14, shown in blue

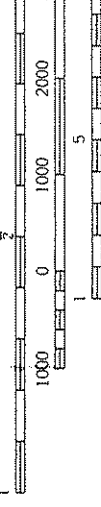
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983 move the projection lines 1 meter north and 35 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks

Map photoinspected 1977

No major culture or drainage changes observed



UTM GRID AND 1969 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



CONTOUR INT
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT
NATIONAL GEODETIC VE

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL
AND STATE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAP: