

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**SENT TO D.C.**

12-15-08

**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 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 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 **Independence Park**

other names/site number **Park #83**

**2. Location**

street & number **3945 N. Springfield Avenue**  Not for publication

city or town **Chicago**  vicinity

state **Illinois** code **IL** county **Cook** code **031** zip code **60618**

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.)

*Walter L. ...* 15HPO  
Signature of certifying official

12-15-2008  
Date

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

\_\_\_\_\_  
American Indian Tribe

**Independence Park**  
Name of Property

**Cook County, Illinois**  
County and State

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

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I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):	_____	_____

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**5. Classification**

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**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 FIX**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>3</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<u>2</u>	<u>6</u> structures
<u>    </u>	<u>4</u> objects
<u>6</u>	<u>10</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register      **N/A**

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

**Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District**

**Independence Park**  
Name of Property

**Cook County, Illinois**  
County and State

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

**LANDSCAPE/ park**  
**RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor recreation**  
**RECREATION AND CULTURE/ sports facility**  
**OTHER/ field house**

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

**LANDSCAPE/ park**  
**RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor recreation**  
**RECREATION AND CULTURE/ sports facility**  
**OTHER/ field house**

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**LATE 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/**

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation     **Concrete**

Roof             **Asphalt**

Walls            **Brick**

other            **Vegetation**

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

**See continuation sheets**

**Independence Park**  
Name of Property

**Cook County, Illinois**  
County and State

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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

- 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.

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

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

**Entertainment/ Recreation**

**Social History**

**Architecture**

Period of Significance **1903 to 1958** Significant Dates

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

Cultural Affiliation **N/A**

Architect/Builder **Hatzfeld and Knox, architects**

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

**See continuation Sheets**

**Independence Park**  
Name of Property

**Cook County, Illinois**  
County and State

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository **Chicago Park District**

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property **7.16 acres**

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	__	_____	_____	3	__	_____
2	__	_____	_____	4	__	_____

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.)

**See continuation sheets**

**Independence Park**  
Name of Property

**Cook County, Illinois**  
County and State

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Julia S. Bachrach, Planning Supervisor and Ally Gumbiner, Intern  
organization Chicago Park District date June 16, 2008  
street & number 541 N. Fairbanks Ave. telephone (312) 742-4698  
city or town Chicago state IL zip code 60611

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:  
Continuation Sheets

**Maps**

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

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

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**Property Owner**

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

name Timothy J. Mitchell, General Supt. and CEO, Chicago Park District  
street & number 541 N. Fairbanks telephone  
city or town Chicago state IL zip code 60611

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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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Section 7 Page 1

**Independence Park, Cook County**

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**Narrative Description**

Independence Park is a 7.86 acre site located at 3945 N. Springfield Ave. on the northwest side of Chicago. The site was created by the Irving Park District which had formed in 1910 and was one of 22 park commissions consolidated into Chicago Park District in 1934. Beginning in 1903, residents of the Irving Park community had begun a long tradition of celebrating Independence Day on this site, which explains the derivation of the park's name. The Irving Park District hired Hatzfeld and Knox to design a brick field house two years after the 1911 acquisition of the ceremonial land. In 1929, park commissioners enlarged the park to the east. This included acquiring a brick bungalow designed by Benedict Bruns to be used as a women's reception building. Park improvements persisted thereafter.

The Irving Park neighborhood was established in the 1800s, as transportation allowed German, Polish, Scandinavian, and Norwegian immigrants to move into the northwestern part of the city. The area was (and still is) characterized by its large Victorian homes, American four-squares, and brick bungalows. Independence Park has grown with its neighborhood and retains its historical integrity rooted in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Independence Park is composed of many contributing resources which date to its period of significance, including the parks landscape. The site consists of 16 resources: 6 contributing and 10 non-contributing. The contributing resources include all three of the park's buildings, three structures, and the entire landscape. The non-contributing resources include several minor structures that are not visually intrusive and two objects installed after 1958. The property has good integrity as represented by these resources, warranting its inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. In order to demonstrate this, three corresponding plans will be used as a part of this nomination to describe the progression of the site as it has adapted to the surrounding community: a 1938 Topographical Survey and General Plan [A], a 1954 Landscape Design Rehabilitation Plan (based on a 1948 design) [B], and a 1984 Chicago Park District Plot Plan [C].

The Independence Park field house [1] is located on the west side of the park, on N. Springfield Avenue, at the foot of W. Dakin St. [A, B, C]. It was the first structure commissioned for the park by Irving Park District commissioners in 1913. The following year, architects Hatzfeld and Knox, completed the stately brick building, which had an indoor swimming pool, a gymnasium, locker rooms, a branch library room, a clubroom, and an auditorium. The building quickly became a major hub of neighborhood activity. It continues to provide many of its original functions and remains the cultural and recreational center of the park and surrounding neighborhood.

Hatzfeld and Knox designed the building in the Classical Revival style which is conveyed through its symmetrical layout, monumental arched openings, grand stairways and balconies. The building also incorporates some aspects of the Prairie style such as its emphasis on horizontality, patterned brickwork and hipped roofs clad in ceramic tiles, and with broad overhanging eaves.

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**Independence Park, Cook County**

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The field house is cruciform in plan with a two-story center pavilion, flanked by two one-and-a-half story wings that are recessed. The building is composed of red brick with intersecting hipped roofs clad in original Spanish ceramic tile. The two main entrances to the building are along the east and west facades of the center pavilion which works as a transept, separating it from the two outer wings of the building.

The east façade of the field house faces the park. Concrete steps lead up to three grand arched bays, with a three-door entrance to the building located within the center arch. Four brick concrete posts divide the two sets of steps leading to the building's front terrace. Two shallow Prairie style urns [2] sit on top of the two outer posts. Created in 1990, these replacement urns strongly resemble the original Prairie Style planters which had been in the same location (There were also a pair flanking the west entry, but those were not reproduced.) Standing on top of the two inner brick posts are original lighting fixtures with 4 globes, in front of the center bay. Historically, a brick and limestone knee wall extended between the two inner posts. This was later replaced with a fence composed of metal tubing.

The northernmost bay contains 3 tall, narrow, double-hung windows. In contrast, the southernmost bay exhibits 3 small square windows above patterned brickwork. The arch of each bay is framed by two cut limestone details, depicting foliate motifs. Pairs of wood brackets also flank each bay, supporting the balcony above. The wooden railing of this second story balcony, which extends across all three bays, is embellished with a "Y"-shaped motif. The "Y" is the municipal Chicago symbol which represents the North and South branches of the Chicago River.

At the second-story level of the east façade, behind the balcony and directly above each of the three doorways below, are three rectangular window bays. Square stationary transoms with a union-jack motif are just above each of the three windows in each of the three bays (nine in total). Horizontal strips of patterned brick run the length of each bay. In the center of the patterned brick is a diamond-shaped limestone foliate motif, echoing those which flank the arched portal bays below. Two identical patterned brick segments, with a diamond-shaped limestone detail, were placed vertically on either side of the three rectangular bays. Just below the porch, down another level of cement steps, a recessed doorway leads to the basement of the field house which underlies the entire structure.

The north and south wings of the building look nearly identical along their east and west facades. Six large rectangles of patterned brick are topped with arched, 3-paned transom windows on both the east and west facades. Identical wood brackets support the slightly-overhanging gabled roof. The north wing, which contains the gymnasium, has three small square windows at ground level below each of the rectangular bays. There is a door leading to the pool area at the southernmost bay of the south wing.



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**Independence Park, Cook County**

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The west façade of the center pavilion, which faces out onto N. Springfield Ave., is quite similar to the east façade, with a few exceptions. The west façade's entry terrace is has two brick posts which flank a single set of concrete steps instead of the four brick posts that flank two sets of steps leading to the east façade. Another difference is that the second story balcony is not repeated here. Instead, there is a horizontal band of brickwork visually divides the first and second stories. There is a wooden ramp on the south side of the west facades entranceway. In addition, a brick chimney rises up on the south side of the building's transept, where the center meets the south wing. Originally, a small greenhouse extended off the south wing of the building, but it was removed by 1970.

The building's interior retains excellent integrity. The field house continues to provide all of its original functions as a recreational center, except for the public library that moved out of the building in 1928. The structure retains many fine interior features including decorative flooring and Anaglypta embossed wallpaper in the recreation center's foyer; glazed brick walls in the indoor pool space; exposed rafters in the gymnasium; many original windows and fine wood trim throughout. The auditorium is particularly lovely with its ornamental plaster molding throughout the room and similar details embellishing the area surrounding the room's historic stage. Centered on the upper portion of the stage's rear wall is a sculptural eagle on a shield. All of these elements are painted a shade of blue-gray. The room also includes a 1937 painting by Max R. Decker entitled *May the Spirit of 1776 Live On*. Consistent with the park's name, the painting depicts a patriotic scene with an allegorical female figure, an early American flag (with stars that reflect the thirteen original colonies), and a Revolutionary war soldier.

The park's walkway system [3] helps define its overall design. Although some program elements have changed with the neighborhood's needs over the years, the circulation system has remained intact, contributing to the landscape's historical integrity. The city sidewalks along N. Springfield Ave., W. Irving Park Blvd., N. Hamlin Ave., and W. Byron St. have all been maintained and form the perimeter of the park. The original inner-park paths, which were likely first composed of crushed gravel, were paved with concrete in 1968 as a modern adaptation. Most of these still follow the original configurations.

A U-shaped walkway curves from the east façade of the field house, around the park's athletic field which provides two softball diamonds. The existing athletic field [4] was constructed in the center of the park's landscape in 1949. Although there was a ball field in this area in the park's original design, by 1930, a sunken garden had replaced it in the center of the park [A]. (At the time, there was also a small playfield on the southwest side of the park.) This garden, which existed between the late 1920s and 1949, contained beautifully orchestrated paths, flower beds, a reflecting pool, a cannon, a flagpole, two small round garden shelters, and a raised area on the east end of the garden with a pergola and benches. After area residents submitted a petition requesting a more extensive field, a plan drawn in 1948 [B] was executed to install the new athletic field with

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**Independence Park, Cook County**

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two softball diamonds: one facing northeast; and the other facing southwest. This arrangement remains consistent today, as does the U-shaped walkway surrounding the fields.

This 'U' is met with another semicircular path [5] at the raised area east of the old sunken garden. A series of small steps formerly led up to a pergola on the north, south, and east sides to an extensive pergola with benches that curved around a prominent flagpole [6]. Just west of the raised area and pergola, the garden included the park's name written out in large letters made of concrete surrounded by lawn. Although many of the garden features, including the pergola, are no longer extant, the elevated site, configuration of the path, flagpole, and concrete letters heralding the name Independence Park still remain. Benches facing the flagpole arc along the semicircular pathway.

An east-west path extends east from the semicircular path [5] to Hamlin Avenue, bisecting the eastern perimeter landscape [7]. Flanking the semicircular path on the north and south are two triangular plots formed by the network of paths. These also date to the period in which the garden was in the park. Today, the eastern perimeter area [7] remains a passive landscape, with many shrubs and historic canopy trees planted in a naturalistic manner. Numerous new trees are being planted in this area in the summer of 2008. This is an improvement is consistent with the area's historic appearance and enhances the integrity of the landscape.

The south side of the park has several recreational features: a playground, Women's Club Building and garage, tennis courts, and youth softball field. Like many of the other paths, the ones edging the playground date to the 1940s [B]. There was a playground in this location [8] in the 1930s [A]. It was one of 3 playgrounds in the park at that time. However, by 1950, when the athletic field replaced the sunken garden, playgrounds on the west side of the park were reconstructed and the one here was removed [B]. In 1988, when the Chicago Park District was replacing old playgrounds, a new one was constructed at this location [C]. It was updated in 1999 with the existing soft-surface structure.

South of the playground stands a brick bungalow [9] that became the Women's Club Building after the home was acquired by Irving Park District commissioners in 1929. The American Craftsman style single-family bungalow was designed by architect Benedict Bruns, in 1919, with Spanish Mission elements. The exterior walls are made of yellow, wire cut brick with limestone details. The roof, composed of intersecting hipped and gabled configuration, is clad in red Spanish ceramic tiles. Wide steps lead up to a porch and recessed doorway on the east side of the bungalow, facing North Hamlin Avenue. Another porch extends from the south side, the secondary entrance, of the building. On the north side, a recently constructed wooden ramp leads from a door on the north façade of the building to a driveway in front of the garage [10]. The small tan brick garage [10] was part of the original construction of the bungalow in 1920, and also acquired in 1929. It is a two-car garage with a gabled roof that is currently in need of repair.

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**Independence Park, Cook County**

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Directly west of the bungalow are four tennis courts [11] which, though re-paved, have been in the same location throughout the park's lifetime. Fencing surrounds the courts, dividing them from the bungalow, the playground, and Byron Street. Around 1930, some horseshoe courts were added to the west of the tennis courts, however; these were later removed. There is a small memorial marker [12] dedicated to Charles A. Karavitch (1960 -1994) located just north of the tennis courts and east of the playground. This was dedicated in 1995. In the southwest corner of the park, west of the courts, is a youth softball field [13]. Though reoriented several times, a softball field has existed on this plot since its earliest designs [A, B]. The current configuration was orchestrated in 1970.

Just north of the youth softball field (south of the field house), is paved play area [14]. Historically, there was a small playground here with a handsome wooden pergola—an open shelter for seating [B]. Designed by Hatzfeld and Knox, this structure formed the eastern edge of the playground. It remained in place until 1970, when it was razed and a basketball court was installed in this area [14]. Although the basketball court was removed in the 1990s, the paved area remains and is used as a play slab and a small parking lot.

Originally, the area on the north side of the field house adjacent to N. Springfield Ave. also contained a playground, which was known as the “tot lot.” (By the 1930s, there were a total of three playgrounds in the park [A]. This pergola matching the one in the south playground formed the easternmost edge of this area until 1970, when both were demolished. The “tot lot” historically also contained two sandboxes and a wading pool. In 1969, the rectangular wading pool was replaced with a circular spray pool [15], which remains today. The 1960s project included the installation of sculptural concrete dolphin [16] which also remains today. In 1993, the “tot lot” was converted into a parking lot [18] which is now adjacent to the spray pool and dolphin. These two areas are enclosed with black metal fencing [17]. Installed in 1998, the fencing extends all along the north and west borders of the park. At the northeast corner of the park, facing Irving Park Rd., the black fencing flanks a bus shelter that was recently constructed by the Chicago Transit Authority [19].

Today, Independence Park retains a great deal of historic integrity. The park and field house continue to provide many of the same activities as they did decades ago, while also adapting to the modern needs of the community. The landscape retains many original walkways, historic trees, topography, athletic areas, and the unique paving that spells out the park's name. Although the original pergolas did not survive, the park's historic buildings convey strong integrity. In fact, both the field house and bungalow retain a significant amount of historic fabric including their original Spanish ceramic tile roofs. There is a concerted effort under way to preserve the bungalow in a manner that will not only enhance its historic integrity but will also provide a model for environmentally friendly technologies. It is clear that Independence Park is becoming model site for the historic preservation movement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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**Independence Park, Cook County**

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**Independence Park List of Historic Resources**

**Contributing Resources**

**Buildings**

Field House (1)  
Bungalow (9)  
Garage (10)

**Sites**

Landscape- which includes walkways (3),  
Raised area with semi-circular path and pavement  
spelling the name Independence Park (5)  
Softball fields (4), perimeter lawn (7),  
and youth softball field (13)

**Structures**

Tennis Courts (11)  
Flagpole (6)

**Non-contributing Resources**

Playground (8)  
Spray pool (15)  
Ornamental Fencing (17)  
Parking Lots (14, 18)  
CTA shelter (19)

**Objects**

Two Reconstructed Planters (2)  
Concrete dolphin sculpture (16)  
Memorial Boulder (12)

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**Independence Park, Cook County**

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**Statement of Significance**

Independence Park meets Criterion A and Criterion C for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The property is locally significant as part of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century movement to create breathing spaces with recreational facilities on Chicago's northwest side. During the early 1900s, members of the Irving Park community began holding large and festive Independence Day celebrations in an open area near Irving Park Blvd. (later renamed Irving Park Rd.) and N. Springfield Ave. These early residents soon began efforts to establish a permanent public park for their growing middle-class neighborhood. In 1910, local residents formed the Irving Park District, one of the first independent park commissions on Chicago's northwest side. After acquiring the Fourth of July grounds, the Irving Park District hired architects Hatzfeld and Knox to design a handsome brick field house for the park. In 1929, the park commissioners enlarged the park through land acquisition, and an existing brick bungalow designed by architect Benedict Bruns was retained as the park's Women's Club Building. Improvements to the park and significant events in the property's social history continued after the consolidation of the Irving Park District into the Chicago Park District in 1934.

This property qualifies for listing on the National Register under the multiple documentation form, "The Historic Resources of the Chicago Park District." The property is significant during a period spanning from 1903 when the grounds were first used for the annual Independence Day Celebration to 1958, the current fifty-year cut-off date for the National Register of Historic Places. The property meets with the following areas of significance: Entertainment/ Recreation, Social History, and Architecture.

Located eight miles northwest of the loop, the Irving Park community began to develop in the 1870s after the Chicago and North Western Railroad agreed to build train stops in the area. "Named after Washington Irving, the village was originally called Irvington, but was later renamed Irving Park."<sup>1</sup> The area's original developers built mansions and fine homes during the 1870s. The commuter suburb represented an attractive and safe haven after the Great Fire of 1871, spurring many Chicagoans to relocate here. Irving Park was part of Jefferson Township, which was annexed to Chicago in 1889, along with several other suburban areas such as Lake View, Lake and Hyde Park Townships. This 1889 initiative proved to be the city's largest single annexation with the addition of 125 square miles of property and 225,000 additional people. At the time, this made Chicago the nation's largest city by area and second in population.<sup>2</sup>

By the early 1900s, the area had good transportation, shops, schools, and attractive homes. "A residential boom between 1895 and 1914 added more than 5,000 new buildings, of which 1,200 were multifamily residents."<sup>3</sup> The area had many civic groups, clubs, and organizations including the Irving Park Women's Club which had formed in the 1880s, the Woman's Relief Corps, the Irving Park Improvement Club,

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<sup>1</sup> Chicago Fact Book Consortium, Local Community Fact Book, Local Community Fact Book Chicago Metropolitan Area Based on the 1970 and 1980 Censuses. University of Illinois at Chicago, 1984, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Louis P. Cain, "Annexation," *The Encyclopedia of Chicago History*, University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Marilyn Elizabeth Perry, "Irving Park," *The Encyclopedia of Chicago History*, University of Chicago Press, 2004, p.428.

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**Independence Park, Cook County**

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the Irving Park Club, and the Irving Park Athletic Club. Many of these groups worked together to plan the community's annual Fourth of July celebration, a tradition that began in 1903.

A program published for the fourth annual celebration by the Citizens of Irving Park in 1906 illuminates the importance of the Fourth of July Celebration and the numerous contests, activities, and festive events of the day. The program began at 8:30 in the morning, with the Epworth Band leading a procession of members of the Grand Army of the Republic and local school children waving American flags. The group marched to the celebration grounds at N. Springfield Ave. and W. Irving Park Blvd. where the Declaration of Independence was read and patriotic songs were sung. Baseball games began at eleven o'clock. The afternoon was filled with races such as separate 50 yard dashes for boys and girls under seven years old, the married ladies' race, the married men's race, the three-legged race and the fat men's race for gentlemen who weighed at least 210 pounds.<sup>4</sup> The following year, a newspaper article describing the events planned for the fifth annual Independence Day celebration also listed a fireworks display.<sup>5</sup>

Around this time, the citizens of Irving Park petitioned Chicago Mayor Fred Busse for the creation of one or more parks in their region. The mayor referred this request to the Special Park Commission, an organization that had been founded at the turn of the century to encourage the establishment of parks and forest preserves throughout Chicago. One of the primary objectives of this quasi-governmental organization was to create parks in overcrowded tenement districts in the city.

Chicago's original parks and boulevards were created after the approval of three acts of State legislation in 1869 that formed the South, West, and Lincoln Park Commissions. "Although the three park commissions operated independently, the overall goal was to create a unified park and boulevard system that would encircle Chicago."<sup>6</sup> By the late 1890s, it had become apparent that the existing large parks (Lincoln, Jackson, Washington, Humboldt, Garfield, and Douglas parks) could no longer satisfy the needs of Chicago's growing population. The city's tremendous industrial expansion had enticed vast numbers of European immigrants to settle here. By 1900, nearly 750,000 people—almost half of Chicago's population—resided in the central part of the city, more than a mile away from any park.<sup>7</sup> "Living and working conditions were intolerable, and in order to survive many immigrant families had to put their children to work. If children were lucky enough to have time off, there were few clean or safe places" in the tenement districts in which they could play.<sup>8</sup>

Chicago's first playground opened at Jane Addams' Hull House in 1893, and social reformers soon spurred a playground movement in efforts to create additional recreational open spaces for children of tenement

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<sup>4</sup> A copy of this program was provided to the author by the Jefferson Park Historical Society.

<sup>5</sup> "Plan Celebration of July 4: Citizens of Irving Park Prepare Program of Speeches, Ball Game, Races, and Parade," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 5, 1907, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Julia Sniderman Bachrach, *The City in a Garden: A Photographic History of Chicago's Parks*, Center for American Places, Harrisonburg, VA: 2001, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Dwight Heald Perkins, *Report of the Special Park Commission to the City Council of Chicago on the Subject of a Metropolitan Park System*. Chicago: 1904, p. 39.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

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districts. Playground advocates “believed that supervised play could improve the mental, moral, and physical well-being of children, and in the early twentieth century they expanded their calls into a broader recreation movement aimed at providing spaces for adult activities as well.”<sup>9</sup> The earliest playgrounds were quite modest in size, appearance and apparatus.

Shortly after the turn of the century, the South Park Commission developed plans for an ambitious system of new parks to serve the residents of tenement districts within their jurisdiction. As explained in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, General Superintendent, J. Frank Foster conceived an innovative park prototype to provide breathing space as well as social, educational, and recreational amenities to the communities in need (FIII, p. 11). Foster believed that the new parks could function as neighborhood centers that would uplift and improve the lives of the residents of the overcrowded squalid districts. He suggested that, in addition to ball fields and playgrounds, the new parks should also provide a variety of features. Among them were separate outdoor gymnasiums for men and women, swimming and wading pools, running tracks, children’s sand courts, and a new type of building, the field house. Based on the precedent of Chicago’s settlement houses, the nation’s earliest field houses provided “athletic, educational, recreational programs and social services throughout an entire year” with facilities that included public bathing, the earliest branch libraries, indoor gymnasiums and cafeterias.<sup>10</sup> The South Park Commission’s first ten innovative neighborhood parks opened in 1905, proving to be an immediate success. In fact, in 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt described these new parks as “one of the most notable civic achievements in any American city.”<sup>11</sup>

The Special Park Commission, formed in 1899 by Mayor Carter Harrison had begun establishing its own municipal parks and playgrounds at the turn of the twentieth century. A major budget cut from the City of Chicago within its first few years of operating, however, made it very difficult for the commission to acquire and improve sites as parkland. “In response, the agency began working with the Board of Education and the three park commissions in order to achieve its goals.”<sup>12</sup> The group also inspected possible sites for open space and whenever it was possible, the Special Park Commission created new municipal parks and playgrounds, often using land that had been donated to the city.

In response to the request for parks in the Irving Park neighborhood, the Special Park Commission inspected several vacant tracts in the area in 1907. These included the ‘Independence Day Celebration’

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<sup>9</sup> Julia Sniderman Bachrach, “Playground Movement,” *The Encyclopedia of Chicago History*, University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 621.

<sup>10</sup> Julia Sniderman Bachrach, *The City in a Garden: A Photographic History of Chicago’s Parks*, Center for American Places, Harrisonburg, VA: 2001, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> As reprinted in South Park Commission, *Report of the South Park Commissioners for a Period of Fifteen Months from December 1, 1906 to February 29, 1908, inclusive*. Chicago: 1908, p. 62.

<sup>12</sup> Julia Sniderman Bachrach, *The City in a Garden: A Photographic History of Chicago’s Parks*, p. 12.

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grounds.<sup>13</sup> Because the Special Park Commission's primary goal was to create parks in the city's most congested districts, however, they were not willing to spend their limited funds in the spacious middle-class Irving Park community. The Special Park Commission's Annual Report asserted "[W]e do not feel justified, under existing conditions, in recommending an appropriation now to buy park land in this part of the City."<sup>14</sup>

Alderman A.W. Bleifuss, who served as Chairman of the Special Park Commission in 1908, suggested another alternative to creating the new park in the Irving Park Community. He advised the "Fourth of July Committee" to make use of existing State enabling legislation that could allow them to create an independent park district. As explained in the Multiple Property Documentation Form (E, p. I2), this 1895 act established new park districts in Chicago neighborhoods that were not within the jurisdictions of the South, West, or Lincoln Park Commissions. The park district established under the act would function as independent municipalities with taxing powers and the ability to "acquire, lay out, establish, construct and maintain park's and boulevards... and have full power to control, manage and govern the said parks and boulevards and the use thereof."<sup>15</sup>

In mid-March, 1910, residents of the Irving Park community filed a petition to bring the formation of a park district to popular vote. Some of the northwest side park advocates were worried that the West Park Commission would receive legislative approval to expand into their territory. At a mass meeting held at the Irving Park country club, Herman A. Ott, a candidate for commissioner of the proposed Irving Park District asserted, "If we don't establish a park district, it will probably not be long before Irving Park will become part of the west park system."<sup>16</sup>

The election to decide the park district proposition was held on April 12, 1910. The park bill carried by a vote of 240 to 207, establishing the Irving Park District and designating the five commission members who ran unopposed on a "Progressive ticket."<sup>17</sup> The newly formed Irving Park District made their first land purchases in August of 1911 to acquire the old Independence Day celebration grounds and adjacent property. By mid-January, 1912, the commissioners had purchased more than five acres of what would eventually become a 7.86-acre park.

By 1911, when the Irving Park District began planning its new park, there were more than a dozen neighborhood parks throughout Chicago. The Lincoln and West Park Commissions had followed the South Park system's prototype by creating new parks that provided facilities such as field houses, open air gymnasiums, ball fields, and wading pools to underprivileged residents in their areas. Similar parks had also begun developing in cities throughout America and Europe. The neighborhood park prototype had become so

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<sup>13</sup> Special Park Commission, *Annual Report of the Special Park Commission, 1907*, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Daniel Breen, ed. *Historical Register of the Twenty-two Superseded Parks Districts*, Chicago: Works Progress Administration and the Chicago Park District, 1941. p. ?.

<sup>16</sup> "Irving Park Votes Today on Park District Project," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 12, 1910, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> "Park Plan Wins in Election," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 13, 1910, p. 11.



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accepted in Chicago that modified versions of its form began to emerge in more affluent neighborhoods such as the Irving Park District, where the parks were needed as community amenities rather than vehicles of social reform.

With a middle-to-upper class constituency, the Irving Park District commissioners may have wanted their facility to represent the public version of a private athletic club. In 1913, they hired architects Hatzfeld and Knox to design the Independence Park field house. This was the first of what eventually became many commissions for Hatzfeld to design field houses for the small independent park districts on the northwest side of Chicago.

Born in Wisconsin, Clarence Hatzfeld (1873 – 1943) received his early architectural training “largely in the office of the late Julius Huber.”<sup>18</sup> After practicing in his father’s firm, J. Paul Huber and Son Architects, in the 1870s, Julius Huber had established his own architectural practice in 1881. Hatzfeld may have begun working in Huber’s office in the early 1890s. In 1899, he became a partner in the firm of Julius Huber & Co.<sup>19</sup> It is unclear as to when Hatzfeld left that position, however; for several years that include the period of 1908 and 1909, he worked as a draftsman in the offices of the Chicago Public Schools Architect’s Department.<sup>20</sup> While there, Hatzfeld met Arthur Howell Knox, a Chicago Public Schools draftsman. Born (c. 1882) in Ohio, Knox was raised and educated in Evanston, Illinois.<sup>21</sup>

Hatzfeld and Knox had both worked under Dwight H. Perkins, the official school architect from 1905 to 1910. Perkins was a noteworthy Prairie School designer who held deep social convictions. In addition to school architecture, Perkins produced some neighborhood park structures for the Lincoln Park Commission, such as the 1907 Seward Park field house and the 1910 Hamlin Park field house. It is likely that Perkins’ work had some influence on the young architects who formed the firm of Hatzfeld and Knox in 1910. The partnership lasted for about a half a dozen years.

After the firm dissolved, Hatzfeld continued on his own in a busy practice designing park field houses, residential structures, banks, automobile showrooms, service stations, retail stores, and clubs including the Logan Square Masonic Temple.<sup>22</sup> He designed more than a dozen field houses in the 1920s and early 1930s, many of which were rendered in eclectic Revival styles that were quite popular during this period. Among these were the Spanish Revival style Athletic Park field house, several English Tudor style buildings for parks including Gompers and Indian Boundary (which also has details following a Native American motif) and Georgian Revival style structures, such as the Kilbourn and Jefferson Park field houses.

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<sup>18</sup> Illinois Society of Architects *Monthly Bulletin*, Oct/Nov, 1943, v. 28, no 4-5, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> Leroy Blommaert, “Julius Huber, Edgewater Architect: The Man and His Work,” v. XIV, n.3, summer, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Schedule of the Salaries and Proposed Revisions Affecting Employees in the Architect’s Department to Take Effect January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1908 and January 1<sup>st</sup> 1909 (on file at the Chicago Historical Society).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid* and *American Architect*, May 18, 1910.

<sup>22</sup> There are numerous entries for Hatzfeld in the America Terra Cotta Index on file at the Chicago Landmarks Division of the Department of Planning and Development, City of Chicago.

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By the mid-to-late 1930s, when the Great Depression forced Hatzfeld to close his architectural office, he was hired by the Chicago Park District as the Recreation Plants and Equipment Technician.<sup>23</sup> Around 1940, he accepted the position of Recreation Technician for the Federal Works Administration in Washington D.C., where he died in 1943.<sup>24</sup> After practicing with Hatzfeld, Arthur H. Knox worked for George C. Nimmons, a renowned Chicago architect.<sup>25</sup> He served as the Director of the Century Diorama Studios for *A Century of Progress*, Chicago's 1933-34 World's Fair.<sup>26</sup> Afterwards, he also had a position for the federal government as architect and construction engineer.<sup>27</sup> During periods before and after the Depression, Knox established his own architectural practice producing designs for a number of buildings including a Walgreen's at Madison and Crawford streets in Chicago, the Alpha Sigma Epsilon Fraternity War Memorial building in Evanston, and other Evanston buildings such as a 1953 fire station.<sup>28</sup>

Though relatively short-lived, the firm of Hatzfeld & Knox designed many residential buildings in the Beverly, South Lawndale, Lincoln Park and Edgewater communities. They also had a number of commissions in the Irving Park community, including several Prairie and Craftsman style brick bungalows in the Villa District, an area just south of Independence Park. (This historic district has been designated as a Chicago landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.) Hatzfeld & Knox also produced the plans for a handsome brick Masonic Hall nearby on W. Irving Park Blvd.<sup>29</sup> The high-profile commission for this monumental building with club rooms, an auditorium, ladies' parlors and men's smoking rooms may have led to the Irving Park District's decision to hire Hatzfeld & Knox to design their field house in 1913, one of the earliest such structures on the northwest side.

The commissioners developed an interesting program for the Independence Park field house that combined features of the neighborhood park prototype with those of a private athletic club. The building was composed of a library, a board room, parlors, ball room (now considered the auditorium) an indoor gymnasium, locker rooms and changing rooms, bathrooms, and an indoor swimming pool. During this period, there were few, if any other park field houses in Chicago that had indoor swimming pools. Outdoor swimming facilities were first introduced in south and west side parks between the late 1890s and early 1900s. These pools were intended to provide hygienic facilities and relief from hot summer temperatures and hundreds of children often used the swimming tanks at a time. Competitive swimming was introduced in the same period by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and private athletic clubs.

<sup>23</sup> *The Recreation News*, Vol. II, no. 2, Feb. 1938, p. 2., published by the Recreation Division of the Chicago Park District, Room 12 Washington Park (from the Chicago Park District Special Collections).

<sup>24</sup> Illinois Society of Architects *Monthly Bulletin*, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Nimmons is listed as his employer on Arthur Howell Knox's Sept 12, 1918 WWI Draft Registration Card.

<sup>26</sup> "Legion Fair Headquarters," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 13, 1934, p. A12.

<sup>27</sup> "Real Estate Notes," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 5, 1949, p. A5.

<sup>28</sup> "3 Fire Stations to be Designed for Evanston," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 26, 1953, p. N14.

<sup>29</sup> "New Masonic Temple to be Erected in Irving Park," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 3, 1910, p. I16.

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In the early 1890s, the Central YMCA and the Chicago Athletic Association (CAA) had constructed the city's earliest indoor pools used particularly for swimming exhibitions, competitive meets, and water polo.<sup>30</sup> "The Chicago Athletic Association, the city's principal athletic club, opened its pool in 1893, formed its first competitive swim team shortly thereafter, and hosted the nation's second annual Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) indoor and outdoor championships in 1897."<sup>31</sup> Newspapers described this event as internationally important especially because of the participation of Paul Neumann, who won the 100 meter race games at the Athens Olympics the previous year.<sup>32</sup> Several Chicago universities soon built indoor swimming facilities. The Illinois Athletic Club, a second downtown club with an indoor pool "inaugurated an interscholastic meet in 1908."<sup>33</sup>

Hatzfeld & Knox rendered the Independence Park field house in a Classical Revival style with some Prairie style influences possibly inspired by Dwight H. Perkins' designs for the Lincoln Park Commission, such as the South Pond Refectory (Café Brauer) and the Seward and Hamlin Park field houses. Cross-shaped in plan, the Independence Park field house has a center two-story pavilion with two one-and-a-half-story wings. The building conveys a strong feeling of classicism through its symmetrical layout and the monumentality of the two-story pavilion. Grand stairways lead to the both facades, and the first story fenestration is composed of large arched openings. A sense of the Prairie style and hints of Perkins' examples of that style are expressed through the long horizontal outer wings, broad tiled roofs with bracketed overhanging eaves, rich brick pattern-work, and Prairie style concrete urns that were originally located at both entrances to the building.

The creation of a branch library in the Independence Park field house was fostered by the Irving Park Woman's Club, an organization devoted to cultural activities and social reform. Founded in 1888, the year before the community was annexed to Chicago, the woman's club always had "a keen interest in books and libraries."<sup>34</sup> In 1901, each club member was asked to donate a book or magazine, marking the beginnings of a circulating library. A decade later, the woman's club worked with the Chicago Public Library to open the first Independence Branch Library at the Fox Drug Store on W/ Irving Park Blvd. just west of the park site. In July of 1914, the library was moved to the second floor of the new Independence Park field house.

The Irving Park District dedicated the new field house as part of its extensive Fourth of July celebration in 1914. Patriotic bunting was used to decorate the park. The festive day included "a parade of the children of the district and the veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic, an athletic meet, and a series of addresses and songs."<sup>35</sup> There was a fireworks display in the evening.

<sup>30</sup> "Hold Aquatic Contests," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 7, 1903, p.12.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Pruter, "Swimming," *The Encyclopedia of Chicago History*, University of Chicago Press, 2004, p. 806.

<sup>32</sup> "Neumann Will Compete," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb. 24, 1897, p.8.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Pruter, "Swimming." *The Encyclopedia of Chicago History*, p. 806.

<sup>34</sup> "Independence Park Branch Highlights," Chicago Public Library, 1998. available on-line at [www.chipublic.org/002branches/independence/indhgh.html](http://www.chipublic.org/002branches/independence/indhgh.html).

<sup>35</sup> "Sane Fourth Planned by all Chicago Suburbs," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 3, 1914, p. 2.

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Because the original landscape plans for Independence Park and the official proceedings of the Irving Park District prior to the early 1930s have long been lost, there is no known documentation regarding the early design of the park.<sup>36</sup> It is clear from early newspaper accounts, however, that the park originally had ball fields and a running track during its first decade. In fact, in 1918, the park hosted baseball games for the Chicago Public High School league.<sup>37</sup> The ball fields were flooded in the winter for ice skating, and in 1920 the rink was used for a skating derby.<sup>38</sup> The park also originally had playgrounds, a wading pool and two shelters with pergolas located north and south of the field house, near N. Springfield Ave. There are original plans of the pergola shelters as well as numerous photographs of them. Designed by Hatzfeld & Knox, these structures had center portions with enclosed roofs sheathed in ceramic tile matching that of the field house. There were outer pergolas with open rafters at the roofline and lower knee walls with a union jack motif.

The field house was a hub of activity in the 1920s. Women's clubs and other organizations held meetings there. Since the building served as the headquarters of the Irving Park District, it was used regularly for public meetings to discuss not only issues related to the management of the parks, but also other neighborhood concerns such as road construction. By 1928, the Chicago Public Library had outgrown its room in the field house, so it was moved to a nearby double storefront building at 3715 W. Irving Park Blvd.<sup>39</sup> (It remained in this space until 1995, when it was relocated to its current space at 3548 W. Irving Park Rd.).

By the late 1920s, the Irving Park District had established several other parks in the area including Athletic Field and Kilbourn Parks which also had field houses, playgrounds, and ball fields. At the same time, there were conflicts at Independence Park between active and passive uses. In a 1930 brochure the park commissioners reported that they had removed the park's large ball field and replaced it with a sunken garden:

“In order to eliminate an average yearly expenditure of some \$250 per year for the replacement of broken lights, roofing tile, interior work by reason of a defective roof caused by flying balls from the baseball field, the athletic activities were finally removed to other parks of the District.”<sup>40</sup>

The fanciful sunken garden included a rock-edged rectangular lily pool in the center, extensive areas of lawn and evergreen plantings defined by trimmed hedges, flower beds, gravel paths, a vine-covered pergola structure, cannons, and a flag pole. The name of the park was articulated in concrete cut-out pavement in the lawn area just west of the pergola. The garden was “illuminated in the evening by colored lights.”<sup>41</sup> The playgrounds and shelters remained, and by this time Independence Park also had tennis courts, horseshoe courts, and putting greens.

<sup>36</sup> Daniel Breen, ed. *Historical Register of the Twenty-Two Superseded Park Districts*, 1941, p. 80.

<sup>37</sup> “Victory Keeps Crane in Race for Prep Title,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 9, 1918, p. A2.

<sup>38</sup> “Last Call for Skating Races,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 22, 1920, p. A1.

<sup>39</sup> “Independence Park Branch Highlights,” Chicago Public Library, 1998.

<sup>40</sup> *The Irving Park District*, 1930.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

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During this period, the Irving Park District had begun acquiring the privately owned properties contiguous with the southeast corner of the along W. Byron St. and adjacent alley. These land purchases enlarged the park to its total of 7.86-acres. The Polk's Criss-Cross Directory indicates that in 1928 there were nine existing houses adjacent to the park on the north side of W. Byron St. and one house at the corner of N. Hamlin Ave. and Byron St. (3900 N. Hamlin Ave.) The park commissioners intended to demolish the houses they acquired. However; because of the prolific and active woman's clubs that met regularly in the field house, they decided to retain the bungalow at 3900 N. Hamlin Ave. as the Woman's Club House.

The bungalow was built in 1920. Its original owner was John Luttrell Coppersmith, a broker in his family's wholesale produce business— P.W. Coppersmith & Co., located on S. Water St. In 1915, some five years before constructing the N. Hamlin Ave. bungalow, Coppersmith's wife, Ella and young son John Jr. were brutally murdered in their south side home. The murderer was grocery delivery boy named William R. Pethick.<sup>42</sup> When the States Attorney announced that he would seek the death penalty for Pethick, Chicago's famous lawyer Clarence Darrow agreed to represent him.<sup>43</sup> Darrow was successful in his efforts to save the murderer from the death penalty, and Pethick remained in prison for 47 years, until he was paroled in 1962.<sup>44</sup>

After the tragic 1915 death of his wife and son, Coppersmith moved to the north side of Chicago.<sup>45</sup> By January of 1920, he was living in a rented apartment with his second wife Clara, one year old daughter, Luttrella, and his mother-in-law, Ruth Crider.<sup>46</sup> At this time, the Coppersmith family was awaiting the completion of their bungalow so that they could move into their new home. Emily Ramsey, who conducted research on the N. Hamlin Ave. bungalow for the Chicago Historic Bungalow Initiative, found a document with the chain of title for the house which served as an agreement between Coppersmith and the contractor Carl F. Clausen of Clausen Construction. The agreement stated that the house and garage would be "an exact duplicate" of a bungalow then under construction at the southwest corner of Wilson and Mozart Avenues known as the Dankos property. (The house is extant and located at 2839 W. Wilson Ave.) The agreement also specified that the contractor would work with architect Benedict J. Bruns instead of Carl M. Behens who had previously been under contract with Mr. Coppersmith.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>42</sup> "Fingerprints Move Slayer to Confess: Pethick Previously Convinced Police He Did Not Kill Coppersmiths," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 18, 1915, p. 1.

<sup>43</sup> "Victims Mate Fights Parole for Killer of 2," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 2, 1956, p. 16.

<sup>44</sup> "Prison's Dean to be Paroled: Served 47 Years," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 21, 1962, p. C8.

<sup>45</sup> John Luttrell Coppersmith's 1917-1918 Draft Registration Card lists his address as 4121 Sheridan Rd. in Chicago and his brother is listed as his closest living relative.

<sup>46</sup> 1920 United States Federal Census.

<sup>47</sup> Agreement between John L. Coppersmith of Chicago, Illinois, party of the first part, and Carl F. Clausen doing business as Clausen Construction Company also of Chicago, Illinois, party of the second part, March 18, 1920, Book 15847, page 609, Cook County Recorder of Deeds.

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Benedict J. Bruns (1881 – 1967) designed both the Dankos home at 2839 W. Wilson and John L. Coppersmith's similar bungalow on N. Hamlin Ave. Bruns was an architect who worked in the office of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White until establishing his own firm specializing in residential buildings around 1919<sup>48</sup>. In 1920, while the construction of the Hamlin Ave. bungalow was underway, Coppersmith replaced Bruns with architect Carl M. Behrens, who completed the project. The completed Arts and Crafts bungalow with Spanish Mission style detail is remarkably similar to house that Coppersmith sought to emulate. The only difference is that the W. Wilson Ave. bungalow has a recessed entry and the N. Hamlin Ave. one does not. (They both originally also had side porches, but the one on the N. Hamlin Ave. bungalow was later removed.)<sup>49</sup>

In 1924, the Coppersmith family moved to Oak Park, Illinois and sold the bungalow to Henry Dick, vice-president of Hart, Schaffner & Marx, a men's clothing company.<sup>50</sup> Henry and Ella Dick and their children lived in the house for approximately five years. In 1929, the Irving Park District acquired the bungalow and also began purchasing all of existing properties on the north side of the 3800 block of W. Byron Street in an effort to enlarge Independence Park. A medical doctor from Bavaria, Anton P. Freund and his family lived at 3836 W. Byron St. Dr. Freund and his son Charles, who was also a physician, ran their medical office out of their home which was just a few doors west of the Coppersmith bungalow. (Considering that some existing residents of the neighborhood incorrectly remember the Coppersmith bungalow as having previously been a doctor's office, it is likely that the Freund's home was a similar-looking bungalow.) The Freunds had a very prominent neighbor named Herman Silas Pepoon, who lived at 3842 W. Byron St.

Herman Silas Pepoon (1860 -1941) was an accomplished botanist, educator and author. Born in Ohio, Pepoon studied medicine and worked as a physician in Nebraska and Illinois prior to a long career teaching biology and botany at Lake View High School in Chicago. Pepoon published *An Annotated Flora of the Chicago Region* in 1927 and was known as an extremely popular and inspiring teacher. In fact, the renowned landscape architect Alfred Caldwell cited Pepoon as a major influence in his life and career.<sup>51</sup> The Pepoon family had a house with extensive gardens that spanned two-and-a-half lots. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, "Besides being a national authority on his subject, Dr. Pepoon's home at [3]842 W. Byron street annually attracted thousands to view his gardens."<sup>52</sup>

The Independence Park District purchased Dr. Pepoon's property in November of 1930. This was the last of "nine residence properties purchased by the park board" to enlarge Independence Park by adding a "strip of land, 360 x 160" feet at the southeastern edge of the park.<sup>53</sup> The additional expanded the park to a total

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<sup>48</sup> Graham, Anderson, Probst and White was invited as his employer on Benedict John Bruns' Sept 12, 1918 WWI Draft Registration Card.

<sup>49</sup> Information provided by Emily Ramsey, Feb. 14, 2008.

<sup>50</sup> Obituaries, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 15, 1919, 1939, p. 20.

<sup>51</sup> Julia Sniderman Bachrach, National Historic Landmark Application for the Alfred Caldwell Lily Pool, July 31, 2004.

<sup>52</sup> "Dr. H.S. Pepoon, Noted Botanist, Teacher is Dead," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Dec. 27, 1941, p. 12

<sup>53</sup> Al Chase, "Buy Two Blocks of Frontage for Park Extension," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov 18, 1930, p. 28.

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of 7.86 acres. For about a year, the newly acquired bungalow on the corner of N. Hamlin Ave. and W. Byron St. served as a residence of the Irving Park District's policeman, Mr. Albert Giesenschlag.<sup>54</sup>

During the Great Depression, Independence Park continued to serve the community, with recreational, social and cultural program that often provided good diversions from the hardships of the early 1930s. The field house was used by many different groups for meetings, lectures, and social events. It was especially well-used by women's groups. For instance in 1930, the Irving Park Catholic junior group hosted an event at the Independence Park field house, which included a one-act play and bridal fashion show. Members of the seventh district of the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs, seventh district juniors, and members of junior auxiliaries throughout the district were the special guests.<sup>55</sup> By spring of 1931, the bungalow officially served used as Independence Park's Women's Club building. In May of that year, Miss Grace Benjamin made a presentation to the Northwest League of Women voters on the child welfare measures that were being considered by the State Legislature.<sup>56</sup> This new facility and the field house continued to be well-used by many different organizations including the Irving Park Woman's Club, Irving Park Junior Woman's Club, and the Parkside Woman's Club.

By the mid 1930s, there were 22 separate park districts operating simultaneously in Chicago, including the Irving Park district. The Great Depression rendered most, if not all of these independent agencies financially insolvent. To gain access to federal funding through President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, voters approved the Park Consolidation Act of 1934, through which all 22 agencies were unified into the Chicago Park District. Between 1935 and 1941, the newly consolidated Chicago Park District received more than \$82 million in federal funding through the WPA (Works Progress Administration) and PWA (Project Works Administration). State and city funds increased this total to more than \$100 million.<sup>57</sup> Using these funds, the park district made numerous improvements throughout the system, which then included 130 parks with a total of 83 field houses and 50 swimming pools.

The Chicago Park District made some improvements to Independence Park using WPA funds. A small green space on the southwest side of the park that had informally been used as a softball field was reconditioned and a backstop was installed. The park's tennis courts and horseshoe courts were upgraded. The basement of the Woman's Building was converted into an arts and crafts studio, and new maple flooring was installed on the first floor. Landscape improvements included planting hundreds of new shrubs and adding a rock garden within the existing sunken garden area.

After the consolidation of the Chicago Park District, much of the earlier programming carried over, and

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<sup>54</sup> 1930 United States Federal Census, note name may have been spelled Giesenscklag.

<sup>55</sup> "Women's Clubs Get Ready for Flower Show," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 23, 1930, p.B6.

<sup>56</sup> "North Side Clubs," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 29, 1931, p.F4

<sup>57</sup> Julia Sniderman Bachrach, *The City in a Garden: A Photographic History of Chicago's Parks*, p. 24.

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**Independence Park, Cook County**

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Independence Park remained one of the most important gathering places in the community. The outdoor activities included ice skating in the winter and tennis, horseshoes, volley ball, archery, playgrounds, and band concerts were popular in the summer. The beautiful sunken garden was maintained, and residents continued to enjoy it as well as the park's famous annual Fourth of July celebration. The high demand for the indoor facilities grew to even higher levels. Groups such as the Independence Improvement Association, Northwest Federation Improvement club held swimming competitions, luncheons and holiday parties. Dozen of women's groups continued to use the bungalow and the Chicago Park District also began offering handicraft and other art classes for girls and women there. \*

In the late 1930s, a group called the Independence Park Arties' League formed to encourage amateur artists from the community ranging in age from 12 to 70 years old, and water colors were displayed in the Women's Club Building. "Most of the work was done under the guidance of Lawrence Porth and Max Decker."<sup>58</sup> The group, which met regularly and exhibited for more than a dozen years, eventually became known as the Regent Art League. Max Robert Decker (1879- 1963), a professional artist whose work included china painting, had attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago between 1901 – 1904 and 1909 – 1910.<sup>59</sup> In 1937, Decker painted *May the Spirit of 1776 Live on*, a mural that has been hanging in the Independence Park field house auditorium possibly since its completion.

In addition to the art club, a theatrical club called the Playmakers' Guild of Independence Park formed in the 1940s.<sup>60</sup> During this period, the nation focused on the war effort and the park provided Civil Defense Training. At this time Independence Park was also one of three northwest side sites to provide plots for children's was gardens. Children could sign up for their own garden plots in the park, and they could receive training to tend their gardens from the teachers and members of the Horticultural Society.<sup>61</sup> The war garden initiative also included lectures at the Independence Park field house by horticulturalists such as Professor Lee A. Somers of the University of Illinois extension department.<sup>62</sup>

Despite the fact that many northwest side residents appreciated Independence Park's passive landscape, during the post-war period there was an increasing awareness that the park needed more space for active recreation. In May of 1948, community members presented a petition to the Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners asking for a larger ball field to be installed in a different location of the park.<sup>63</sup> The park district

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<sup>58</sup> "Artists' League to Open Show in Park Tomorrow," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Sept 22, 1940. pNW5.

<sup>59</sup> Decker's transcripts from SAIC were provided by Bart Ryckbosch, Glasser and Rosenthal Archivist at the Art Institute of Chicago, March 6, 2008. Max Robert Decker is listed as a self employed artist living at 4026 Lawler (approximately one mile west of Independence Park) on his 1917- 1918 WWI Drafts Registration Card.

<sup>60</sup> "Our Town," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Feb 8, 194, p. N7.

<sup>61</sup> "Sparse Spinach Causes No Fear Among Children," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 1, 1945, p. NW6.

<sup>62</sup> "Garden Expert to Talk in Independence Park," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 7, 1943, P. NW1.

<sup>63</sup> Chicago Park District Journal of the Proceedings, Vol., XV, 1948-49, p. 2.



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**Independence Park, Cook County**

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developed plans to remove the entire garden area east of the field house and replace it with such athletic facilities. The new ball field and back stops were completed by the fall of the following year.<sup>64</sup>

In addition to the outdoor facilities, the Independence Park field house continued to be actively used in the 1950s and 1960s. The Chicago Park District aquatic staff provided training for competitive swimmers including water polo. A new camera club formed which met regularly in the field house. Dances and parties also remained popular there. Between the field house and the Women's Club Building, more than 30 groups held regular meetings, luncheons, parties, and educational programs in the park. These included the Pioneer Women's Club, the Spanish American War Widows, the Regent Art Club, and Grandmother's Club of Irving Park.

The surrounding community went through some upheaval during this period, when the Kennedy Expressway was constructed causing the demolition of homes and businesses and displacement of many area residents. North of the expressway, some of the large beautiful homes were replaced by apartment buildings. Despite this many significant historic properties remained in the area, and in the 1980s, a new trend began when new homeowners began restoring and rehabilitating the community's valued housing stock. These groups include the Old Irving Park Association, the Greater Independence Park Neighborhood Association and the Irving Park Historical Society.

Also in the 1980s the Independence Park Advisory Council has formed. This group has brought new vitality to the park and today the programs ranging from indoor soccer and floor hockey to fun and games, Special Olympics, track and field, softball, t-ball, and Mom, Pops and Tots are well-attended along with the ever-popular swimming classes. The bungalow continues to be used for arts and crafts classes and club activities. In recent years, the Advisory Council has begun to work with the Chicago Park District to rehabilitate the bungalow using environmentally-friendly technologies. The Historic Chicago Bungalow Association has also been assisting in this effort. The resulting Independence Park Bungalow Renovation Project seeks to not only preserve the bungalow, but to have this property demonstrate how historic preservation efforts can be coupled with green building practices to homeowners throughout the city.

Over the years, Independence Park has continuously provided a variety of athletic, recreational, social, and educational programs and services to the community. Although it has adapted to modern needs, the park retains a good deal of historic fabric. Independence Park remains a vital community center and valued historic resource to the surrounding Irving Park community.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, Vol. XVI, 1949-1950, p. 342.

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**Independence Park, Cook County**

**Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The property is bounded on the north by the south curb-line of W. Byron Ave., on the south by the north curb-line of W. Irving Park Rd., on the east by the west curb-line of N. Hamlin Ave, and on the west by the east curb-line of N. Springfield Ave.

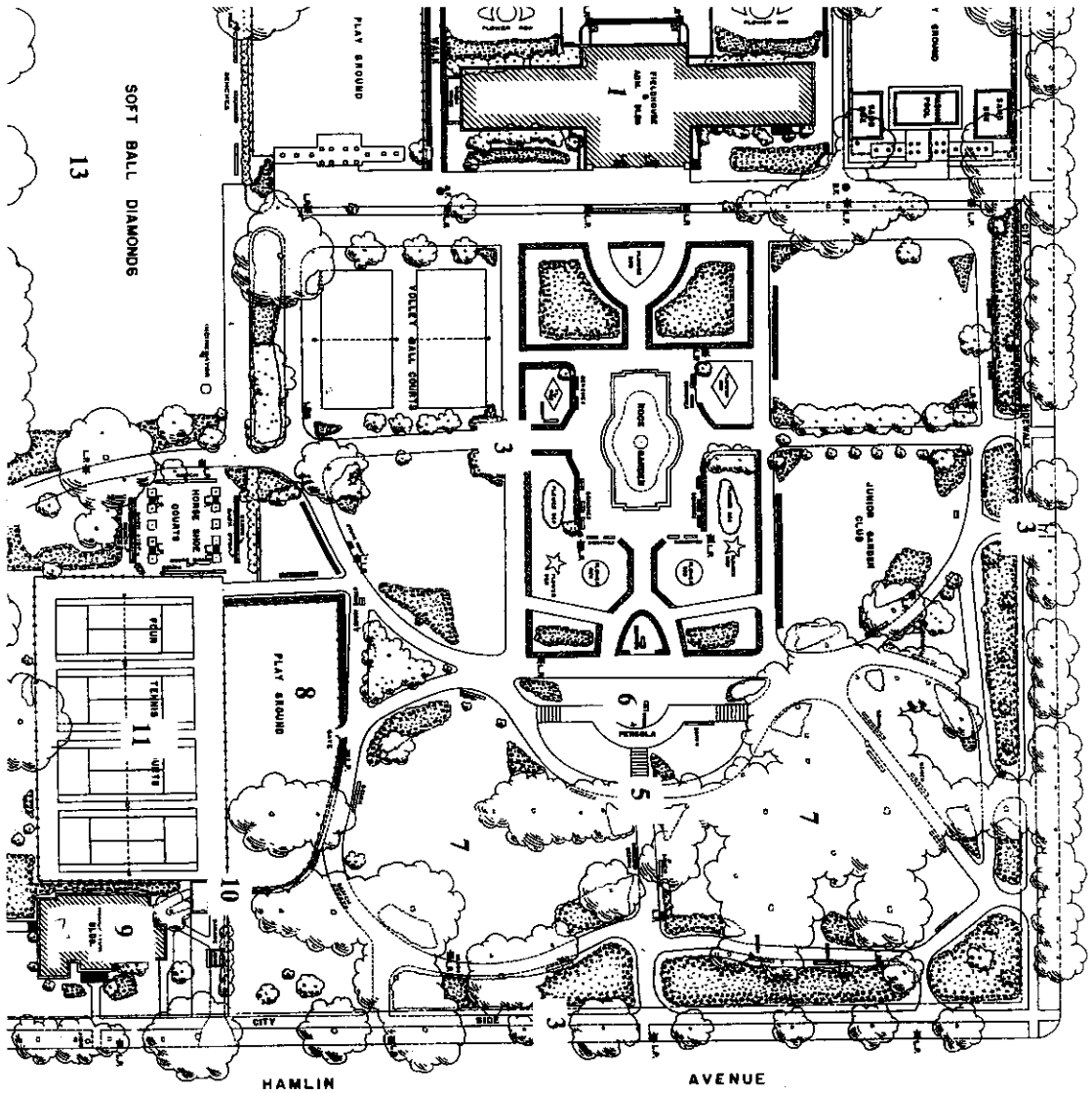
**Boundary Justification**

This is the plot of land historically associated with the park during its period significance.

**UTM References**

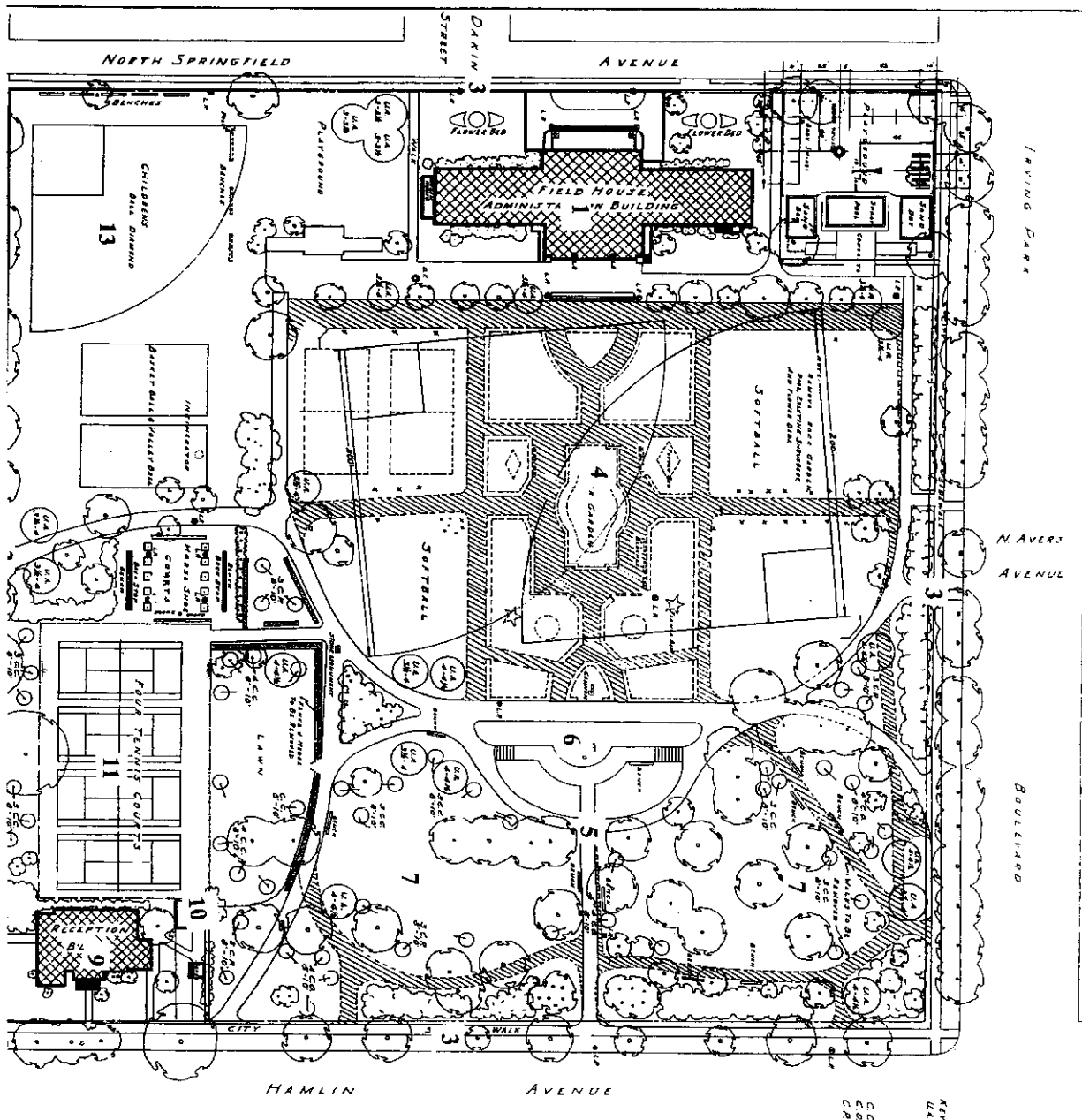
Zone 16

A. 4644 900E	439 680N	C. 4644 120E	440 680N
B. 4644 900E	439 480N	D. 4644 120E	440 490N



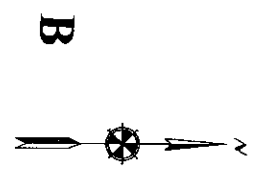
DRAWN BY M.S.A. PROJECT # 3756 FOR RECORD PURPOSES  
 ACCEPTED BY *[Signature]* MAY 1978  
**CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT**  
 INDEPENDENCE PARK





PLANTING LIST

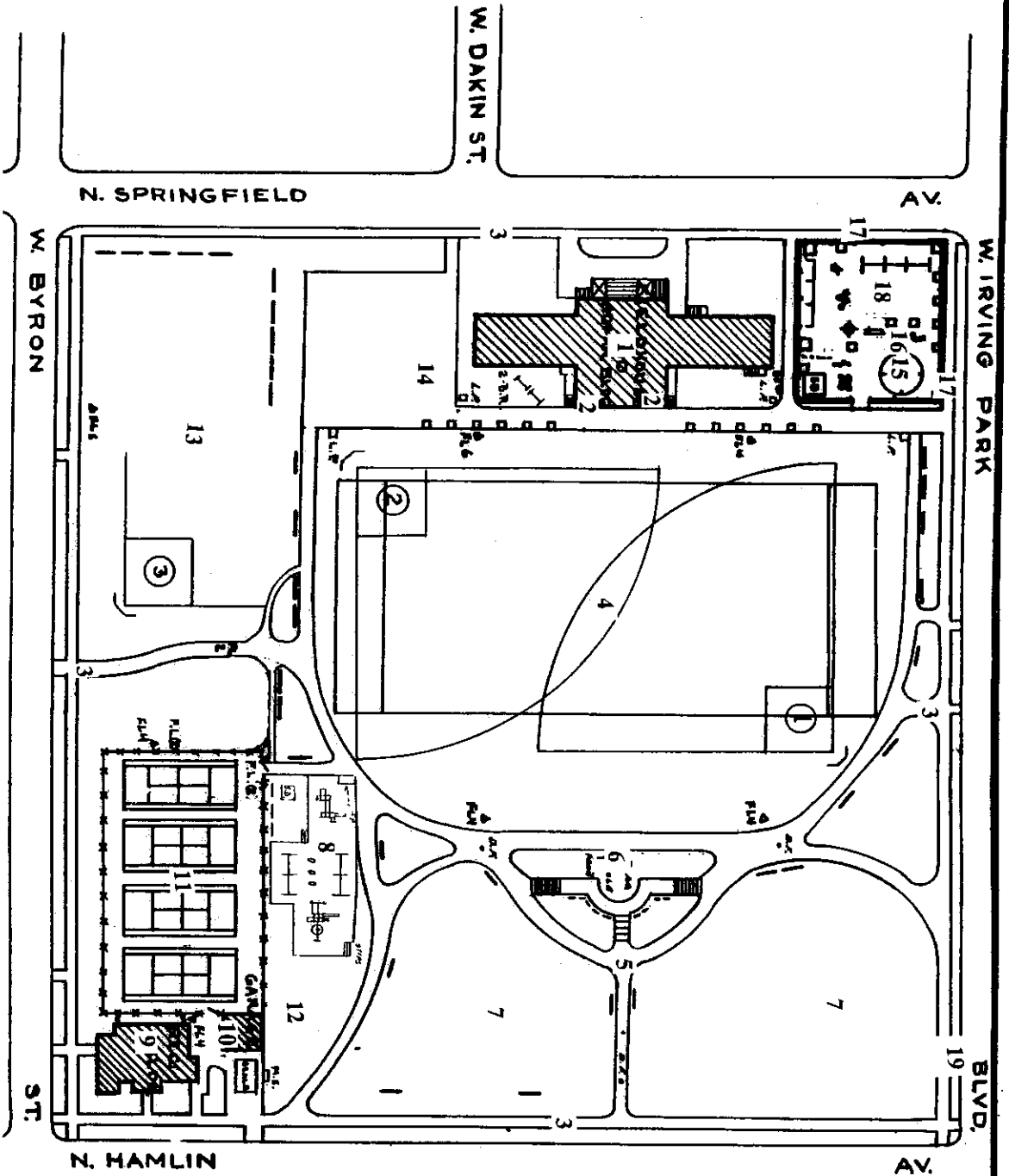
KEY	QUANTITY	SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	SIZE
UT	10	ULMUS AMERICANA	AMERICAN ELM	3 1/2"
CC	12	CORYLUS CORNUS	COGNAC THORN	3 1/2"
CR	10	CRATAEGUS PUNCTATA	DOGWOOD	3 1/2"
CR	10	CRATAEGUS PUNCTATA	DOGWOOD	3 1/2"



- KEY**
- EXISTING TREES
  - TREES TO BE ADDED
  - ✕ TREES TO BE REMOVED
  - ▨ EXISTING WALKS
  - ▨ TO BE REMOVED
  - ▨ NEW WALKS

NOTES: 1. ALL SHOWN BELOW ARE THOSE OF OFFICIAL DEPARTMENT PLANNING DRAWING. 2. DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION DETAILS.

**CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT**



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PARK NO. 83  
COMM. NO. 87

you.

If you have any questions or concerns in this regard please contact Alexis Abernathy, alexis\_abernathy@contractor.nps.gov, 202-354-2236.

February is African American History Month. Celebrate with the National Register: <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/feature/afam/INDEX.HTM>

**WEEKLY LIST OF ACTIONS TAKEN ON PROPERTIES: 2/17/09 THROUGH 2/20/09**

**KEY: State, County, Property Name, Address/Boundary, City, Vicinity, Reference Number, NHL, Action, Date, Multiple Name**

**GEORGIA, HENRY COUNTY,  
Lawrenceville Street Historic District,  
Lawrenceville St. roughly between the Henry County Courthouse square and GA 20,  
McDonough, 09000054, LISTED, 2/20/09**

**ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
Independence Park,  
3945 N. Springfield Ave.,  
Chicago, 09000023,  
LISTED, 2/18/09  
(Chicago Park District MPS)**

**ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
Inland Steel Building,  
30 W. Monroe St.,  
Chicago, 09000024,  
LISTED, 2/18/09**

**ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,  
Spiegel Office Building,  
1038 W. 35th St.,  
Chicago, 09000025,  
LISTED, 2/18/09**

**ILLINOIS, HAMILTON COUNTY,  
Cloud, Chalon Guard and Emma Blades, House, 300 S. Washington St., McLeansboro,  
09000026, LISTED, 2/18/09**

**ILLINOIS, KANE COUNTY,  
Wing Park Golf Course,  
1000 Wing St.,  
Elgin, 09000027,  
LISTED, 2/18/09**