

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER
LISTED

MAY 21 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 Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool

Other name/site number 085-132

2. Location

Street & number 711 Nebraska Avenue

☐ not for publication

City or town Holton

☐ vicinity

State KS

Code KS

County Jackson

Code 085

Zip code 66436

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 G. Gorman DSHAP

4-10-09

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:)

Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool
Name of Property

Jackson 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	
2	1	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2	1	total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

New Deal-era Resources of Kansas

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter Categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture: Sport Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture: Sports Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Nineteenth and Early 20th Century American
Movements

Rustic

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: Concrete

Walls: Stone

Roof: Concrete

Other: Asphalt shingle

Narrative Description

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

Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool

Name of Property

Jackson 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)

- ☒ **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 likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance

1936-1938

Significant Dates

1938

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Paulette & Wilson, engineers. Charles Shaver, architect

Joe Strowig, construction superintendent

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

City of Holton

Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool
Name of Property

Jackson County, Kansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	5	2	6	4	2	2	0	4	3	7	2	0	5	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

3														
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 Dale E. Nimz, Historic Preservation Consultant
Organization For the City of Holton Date October 20, 2008
Street & number 1928 Countryside Lane Telephone 785-842-8992
City or town Lawrence State KS Zip code 66044

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 of Holton, Attn. Glenn Rodden, City Manager
Street & number 430 Pennsylvania Telephone 785.364.2721
City or town Holton State KS Zip code 66436

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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool
Holton, Jackson County, KS

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Distinguished by its Rustic-style Bath House and Filter House, the Holton Swimming Pool is a well-preserved example of the social and recreational property type defined in the National Register Multiple Property Document, "New Deal-era Resources of Kansas," nominated in 2002. Although there have been alterations, the swimming pool facility retains substantial architectural integrity in the areas of design, materials, workmanship, and setting.

The pool is located in Rafter's Park in the northwest part of Holton, Jackson County, Kansas. Rafter's Park includes an area of approximately three city blocks between Seventh on the south and Ninth Street on the north and Kansas Avenue on the east and Keller Avenue on the west. The nominated property only includes the bath house, filter house, and swimming pool. These structures occupy the south end of a natural drainage basin and the facility was designed for that particular site. The bath house and filter house are examples of the Rustic style that was widely constructed by relief workers during the decade of the federal work relief programs (1932-1942) and common in recreational facilities. Rustic-style structures were designed to blend with and not intrude upon the environment. Consequently, building materials were selected to express the qualities of ruggedness, durability, practicality and native origin.

Exterior

Bath House (contributing)

South of the pool and oriented east-west between two relatively steep banks, the bath house is a one-story rectangular structure with projecting entrance bays slightly west of center. The main block of the bath house is approximately 132 feet long by 20 feet wide. The structure is constructed of steel and reinforced concrete with a concrete foundation. Walls are veneered with coursed rock-faced native limestone blocks. Retaining walls and open stairways have concrete caps. The flat roof is constructed as a promenade with an open pyramidal-roofed shelter (originally a concession stand) in the center overlooking the entrance bays.

The bath house and pool entrance faces south. There is a large concrete courtyard to the southeast containing the outline of the original wading pool. Stone walls and two open stairways to the roof deck flank the projecting entrance bay.

Characteristic of the Rustic style, there are few decorative elements ornamenting the bath house and filter house. The main entrance has a segmental arched opening with shaped stone keystones. There is a blue WPA emblem mounted above the entrance. Window openings in both buildings have flat arches with stone keystones and painted concrete sills. The deck has a low stone railing with regular pierced openings. Square stone masonry posts support the shelter's pyramidal roof which is covered with asphalt shingles. There is a pedestrian entrance in the southwest corner of the shelter. There are stone walls with end posts at both ends of the promenade. A plaque, "Erected by the Works Progress Administration and

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Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool
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City of Holton A. D. 1938, is mounted on the east end post. There are angular stone retaining walls extending from the north ends of the bath house.

Although there have been alterations, the architectural integrity of the bath house is good. The interior plan of the bath house and most significant features of the first floor interior remain. From the primary south entrance, two corridors flank the central basket room. The basket room has stone walls with large semi-circular arched openings. Corridors along the south wall lead to the dressing rooms. The men's dressing room is located in the west section of the bath house and the larger women's dressing room is in the east. There are head-high concrete block partitions in the dressing rooms. A former women's lounge is further west of the women's dressing room. A small storage room at the corner of the men's dressing room is located under the west retaining wall.

The bath house, filter house, and swimming pool were renovated in 1986. The most visible alteration to the bath house (1938) is a modern hipped-roof porch on square timber posts that extends beyond the original projecting entrance. Other exterior alterations include modern painted metal entrance doors in the bath house. Original six-light windows in the bath house have been replaced with louvered windows. Two side openings from the interior of the bath house beside the entrance bay have been filled with stone. Also, a modern metal access ramp with metal railing has been installed on the west side of bath house.

In 1986, the concrete deck/roof on the bath house was replaced. A stone wall dividing the west end of the roof deck was removed. A modern metal safety railing was installed on top of the stone wall of the bath house deck. In the filter house, five window openings to the west were filled with stone.

Some sections of wall in the interior of the bath house have been re-pointed with inappropriate gray-colored mortar. An opening in the east end of the corridor in the bath house has been filled with modern concrete block.

Filter house (contributing)

The rectangular filter house (1938) is located north of the bath house on the west side of the pool. Although the original masonry openings remain, the filter house has modern paired painted metal entrance doors centered in the east elevation flanked by modern louvered windows. There is a central louvered window in the north and south elevations. Five rear window openings in the filter house to the west have been filled with stone. The 1936 architectural drawings and historic photographs show that the filter house originally had a flat roof with a low stone parapet. The filter house was altered in the 1986 renovation. A new hipped roof covered with asphalt shingle roofing was constructed.

Swimming Pool (non-contributing)

The swimming pool is polygonal in form with the deeper and narrower end to the north. It is approximately 75 feet wide and 150 feet long. The pool is constructed of reinforced concrete and surrounded by a broad concrete deck. There are original stone bleachers set in the hillside overlooking the east side of the pool.

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**Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool
Holton, Jackson County, KS**

In 1986 the Holton swimming pool was rebuilt and enlarged in the same location with a new concrete deck. The original diving platform, mounted on an island in the deeper north end of the pool, was removed and modern three-meter and one-meter diving boards were constructed on the north edge of the pool.

In this renovation, a lower section of the original stairway to the pool on the west side was removed. At the same time, a new rectangular wading pool (12 x 20 feet) was constructed west of the swimming pool and adjacent to the filter house. This replaced the original concrete octagonal wading pool southeast of the bath house. Sections of modern concrete retaining walls were constructed around the wading pool to the southwest. A lower section of the existing stone bleachers on the east side of pool was removed and a new retaining wall was constructed. A modern chain-link metal fence has been installed around the swimming pool.

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Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool
Holton, Jackson County, KS

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Designed to enhance a natural drainage basin, the Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool facility, located at Rafter's Park, Eighth Street extended between Washington and Nebraska Streets, Holton, Jackson County, Kansas, is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as a significant example of a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project constructed in Kansas during the Great Depression of the 1930s. The Holton Bath House and Pool facility is being nominated for inclusion in the "New Deal-era Resources of Kansas" Multiple Property Document (MPD) as an example of the social and recreational facility property type constructed by local workers with funds provided by the WPA for work relief.

Built in 1936-1938, the swimming pool is a local landmark in Holton. Two buildings, a large bathhouse and a small filter house, are associated with the swimming pool. The exterior and interior architectural integrity of the bathhouse is good. The architectural integrity of the filter house is fair. In 1986 the swimming pool was reconstructed in approximately the same location as the original pool. Although there have been alterations, the Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool facility retains substantial integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. This facility is an important artifact of the community's New Deal history. As the MPD mentions, the configuration of social and recreational buildings (the cultural landscape) is important to the significance and integrity of resources in this category. The Holton Swimming Pool facility retains excellent integrity of location and setting.

Architectural history

The Holton Bath House and Filter House are interesting examples of the Rustic style that was widely constructed by relief workers during the decade of the federal work relief programs (1932-1942). This style reflected the principles of rustic architecture asserted by the National Park Service. Arthur Good set forth the basic style and ideals of rustic architecture in his influential 1935 publication, Park Structures and Facilities. Rustic-style park structures were designed to blend in with and not intrude upon the environment. According to Good, "it is a style which, through the use of native materials in proper scale and through the avoidance of severely straight lines and over-sophistication, gives the feeling of having been executed by pioneer craftsman with limited hand tools. It thus achieves sympathy with natural surroundings and with the past."¹

As in the Holton Bath House and Filter House, horizontal lines and silhouettes were emphasized. Building materials were to express the qualities of ruggedness, durability, practicality and native origin in order to create the impression of the building as a natural outgrowth of the park itself. These principles of

¹ Martha Hagedorn-Krass, "WPA Beach House at Gardner Lake," National Register nomination (1992), Section 8-5. See also Albert H. Good, Park Structures and Facilities prepared for the U. S. Department of the Interior and the National Park Service. (Rahway, NJ: Quinn and Boden, 1935).

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Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool
Holton, Jackson County, KS

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design were common in WPA buildings and the Holton Bath House and Filter House are good examples of this style constructed in Kansas.

Site selection for the swimming pool converted a low-lying swampy pond into a civic improvement. Paul Anderson, who was the Holton city and Jackson County engineer in the 1930s when the swimming pool was constructed, recalled in 1983 that he and John Brink, a manager for the regional WPA office in Topeka, were instrumental in deciding where to build the pool. As Anderson commented, the site was once a swamp and had to be drained before the pool could be constructed. "It [the site] didn't look like you could do anything with it." Some local residents thought the pool should be located in Linscott Park near the downtown, but Anderson and Brink decided that the Rafter's Park location offered a better landscape for the pool.²

Construction plans illustrated with a handsome drawing of Holton's modern swimming pool were prepared by October 29, 1936. Paulette and Wilson were the design engineers with Charles Shaver of Salina as associate architect. Bob Paulette and Murray Wilson formed their partnership in 1932 with offices in Salina and Topeka, Kansas. They designed dams and lakes for the Kansas Fish and Game Commission and also public works improvement for Kansas towns and cities.

When Bob Paulette died in 1941, the firm's name was changed to Wilson & Company, Engineers and Architects. World War II created a demand for the design of military air bases and Wilson & Company rapidly expanded to carry out projects for the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers in Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Kansas. In the 1950s, the firm participated in the design of McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita, the rehabilitation of Schilling Air Force Base at Salina, Kansas, and Walker Air Force Base at Roswell, New Mexico. In 1954, Wilson & Company was awarded the design and construction management contract for the Kansas Turnpike from Wichita south to the Kansas-Oklahoma border. The company remains an important engineering firm with numerous offices including two in Kansas and world-wide contracts in 2008.³

Chronology

Ever since the Holton swimming pool facility was completed in 1938, it has been an important symbol of the community's progress. "The hopes and ambitions of those of the community who have long looked forward to the time when Holton would have a modern, sanitary swimming pool were realized" in January, 1936 when the Holton city commissioners received word that a sum of \$89,000 had been allocated by the federal government for this purpose.⁴ In the middle of the Great Depression, residents were excited by the prospect that Holton would gain one of the most modern pools in Kansas including a bathhouse, purifying plant, and landscaping.

² "WPA Engineer Recalls Pool's Construction," ca. 1983, undated and unidentified newspaper clipping, possibly Holton Recorder, Jackson County Historical Society collections.

³ See Wilson & Company website http://www.wilsonco.com/wilsonco_apps/history/asp. Accessed 7/01/2008.

⁴ "Swimming Pool Assured Holton," Jackson County Signal 23 January 1936, p. 1, col. 6.

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Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool
Holton, Jackson County, KS

Although the initial programs implemented by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal provided Americans with some relief, the devastating effects of the Depression continued. The WPA was created by executive order on May 6, 1935 using \$1.4 billion dollars in federal funds. The agency was considered a temporary program and funding was renewed annually. Like earlier programs, the WPA was intended to employ large numbers of people through locally sponsored projects as well as through projects for state and federal agencies. The WPA constructed many engineering, road construction, and public building projects. These include outdoor recreational facilities such as swimming pools, stadiums, playgrounds, fairgrounds and athletic fields. In 1936 the WPA employed over three million people.⁵

Plans for the swimming pool announced in the Signal developed as reported, but the whole project took longer than originally expected. The Holton pool would be "modern in every respect" equipped with underwater lighting and a filtration-chlorination plant. The water would be maintained as pure as city drinking water. The pool would be located in Rafter's Park on the site "formerly occupied by the south pond." The proposed site was described as "ideal for a pool location" because the contour of the ground provided a natural amphitheater. Work on the pool would be scheduled by the city in stages beginning with the laying of water lines and sewers. City leaders expected that it would require all summer to complete the pool and all work would be handled by relief labor.

Essentially, this modern pool would be free. The city's part of the cost (about \$7,500) would be paid by the issuance of self liquidating bonds. The city planned to lease the pool to a private operator and the revenue from the lease would pay for the principal and interest payments on the bonds. As the Signal reported, "the city will come into possession of a fine modern pool at no cost to property owners. The commissioners are deserving of much credit for their enterprise in securing for the community this fine utility."⁶

Both local newspapers, the Signal and the Holton Recorder, vocally supported the efforts of city and county leaders to secure federal New Deal funds for work relief and infrastructure investment. In May, 1935, the Signal reported that a \$4,800,000,000 Works bill had been approved by Congress. As the Signal's editor admonished, "the communities who are going to receive the most favorable consideration in the allotment of this money are going to be the ones who show some disposition on their part to attempt to meet the situation part way... If Holton or Jackson county expect to get a lake, a school building, an armory, an appropriation for roads, they are going to have to show some evidence of a desire to put up a few hundred dollars to match the government's thousands. If this is not done, this community may just as well forget it and sit by and watch other counties and towns walk off with the roads, lakes, and other liberal grants."⁷ Later in August, about fifty township trustees, members of school boards, and mayors of incorporated cities of the county attended a meeting in the Jackson County Courthouse to get information

⁵ "New Deal-era Resources of Kansas," National Register Multiple Property Document (2002), E-19.

⁶ "Swimming Pool Assured Holton," Signal 23 January 1936, p. 1, col. 6.

⁷ "Holton and Jackson County Must Get Busy to Receive Public Works," Signal 23 May 1935, p. 1, cols. 3-4.

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Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool
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about how projects should be prepared and presented to the WPA for consideration. Oscar Palmer, first district WPA director based in Topeka, explained that all relief work would be administered by the WPA as soon as possible.⁸

In March, 1936, the Signal editor commented, "for a good many years it has been the hope of many Holton people that the town would one day have a swimming pool that those who enjoy this most healthful and beneficial exercise and recreation might be able to indulge in it without going to Topeka or elsewhere... It comes rather as a fortunate break for the town, as they say, that a way has been opened by which this community may have one of the finest swimming pools in this section of the United States though the WPA... Such an opportunity will probably never come to the town again...Holton cannot afford to pass up a gift of this size or an enterprise so desirable."⁹

Construction of a swimming pool was the centerpiece of a larger park improvement project. Improvement of Rafter's Park included landscaping, a parking place for cars, a system of roads and drives, shelter houses, a band shell, lighting, walks, a wading pool for children, and, finally, a large modern swimming pool. A Signal article reported that the pool would be "the finest modern sanitary pool in this section of the United States." Engineers stated that there were only two other pools comparable to the proposed Holton pool in Kansas. The reporter concluded that income from the pool easily would be sufficient to repay the bonds "considering the fact that there will be no pool within a hundred miles of the Holton pool that will compare in excellence."¹⁰

A few days later, the Signal editor summarized the argument for the park improvement plan. "The people of Holton have long dreamed of the time when this park could be improved by the addition of the very things that are now being suggested." The editor favored the project for the following reasons.

"First: It offers an opportunity to secure a splendidly improved park at little or no cost. Second: It will provide a good many thousands of dollars in labor which is badly needed at this time and all of which will be spent [in the community]. Third: It will make possible a modern sanitary swimming pool which will enable the young people of the community to secure this healthful exercise at home. Fourth: The commissioners plan to lease the pool for sufficient to pay the interest and the principal on the bonds. If this done, the entire project will not cost the taxpayers a dollar. Fifth: If Holton does not take advantage of this offer of \$83,000 by the federal government it will go elsewhere and be lost not only to the labor of this community but to the merchants and others who would be benefited by the expenditure of this amount of money in the community."¹¹

Park improvement and a new swimming pool were very attractive projects, but the expenditure for work relief was equally important and met the immediate need in Holton and the national WPA goals. As the

⁸ "WPA Meeting Held Tuesday," Signal 22 August 1935, p. 1, col. 6.

⁹ "Holton Must Not Lose This Splendid Gift," Signal, 5 March 1936, p. 1, col. 6.

¹⁰ "A Chance For Park Improvement," Signal 12 March 1936, p. 1, col. 3.

¹¹ "An Opportunity Is Presented," Signal 19 March 1936, p. 1, col. 6.

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Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool
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Signal reported, the project would provide one hundred men work for a year and would bring \$50,000 into the community, "every dollar of which will be spent in Holton, with Holton merchants and taxpayers." Also, material and equipment worth \$30,000 would be purchased locally.¹²

One week before the crucial city election on April 7, the Signal reported on the replies to a letter written to city clerks of several Kansas towns asking how much rental they were receiving from their swimming pools. These letters outlined a contemporary context for the proposed Holton swimming pool. Olathe received \$850 a year from its lease and furnished city water for the municipal pool. Clay Center operated its own pool and earned \$5452 in the past two years. Chanute received \$1500 a year from its lease and the city furnished water, light, power, and chemicals. Coffeyville received \$1750 a year and the city furnished water, light, power, and chemicals. Oswego leased its pool for forty-five percent of gross receipts. Ottawa received \$800 from its lease and the city furnished nothing. The Ottawa pool had been in operation for eleven years.¹³

The park improvement bonds were approved on April 7 decisively by a vote of 545-234. In its report, the Signal reporter concluded, "Holton is to be congratulated for its commendable progressive attitude in the matter of securing this splendid recreational facility."¹⁴

Construction plans illustrated with a handsome drawing of Holton's modern swimming pool were prepared by October 29, 1936. Paulette and Wilson were the design engineers with Charles Shaver as associate architect. As an article in the Signal described Holton City WPA Project No. 2034, "the new swimming pool, which will embody all the latest innovations in design and equipment, will be constructed of reinforced concrete and will be seventy-five feet wide and one hundred sixty feet long with a maximum depth of nine feet, six inches. An island will be provided near the deep end on which 3-meter diving boards will be located." The bath house was to be constructed of native stone, one hundred thirty-two feet long and seventeen feet wide inside. One of the features of the bath house was the roof slab which was constructed in the form of a promenade with a concession room. The interior of the bath house included ladies and men's dressing rooms, rest rooms, check rooms, showers, and footbaths. A wading pool south of the bath house was designed to be octagonal in shape with each side fifteen feet long ranging in depth from fifteen to twenty-four inches.¹⁵

Other park improvements included building three hundred linear feet of storm sewer, a water supply line, and a sanitary sewer as well as the construction of a shelter house, remodeling the caretakers' house constructing an additional shelter house in the boat landing, and constructing a network of roads, drives,

¹² "Park Improvement Plan to be Presented to Voters," Signal 26 March 1936, p. 1, cols. 3-4.

¹³ "City Election Next Tuesday," Signal 2 April 1936, p. 8, col. 4.

¹⁴ "Park Improvement Plan Carries by Big Majority," Signal 9 April 1936, p. 1, cols. 1-2.

¹⁵ "WPA Makes Possible A Fine Modern Swimming Pool For This Community," Signal 29 October 1936, p. 1, col. 2-5.

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Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool
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and walks. The total cost of the project in 1936 was \$92,190.00 of which Federal funds comprised \$79,485 and the city of Holton's share was \$12,704.¹⁶

With such a complex project in progress, work on the swimming pool itself lagged behind the original schedule. Early in June, 1937, the Signal reported, "while splendid progress is being made on the city swimming pool there is not any likelihood that it will be completed in time for use this summer. The foundation of the heating plant is in and some of the cement poured in the floor of the pool. The bath house is but partially complete and much work remains to be done. The swimming pool and park improvement project is a big job and involves a good many hours of work."¹⁷

In fact, the park and swimming pool project went on for more than a year culminating in a gala opening scheduled on the Fourth of July, 1938. On June 9, 1938, the Holton city commissioners leased the pool to J. A. Lawrence of Ottawa. He took charge of the pool operation and concessions. Lawrence controlled a number of pools in the Midwest and reportedly, his pools had "a reputation for outstanding cleanliness and attention to sanitary details."¹⁸

The city advertised the Fourth of July celebration as early as June 27. The operator began filling the pool on June 28 and the swimming pool was ready for use by June 30. Plans for the celebration included the opening of the new pool with a high diving exhibition, fire dive, and bathing beauty contest. Other attractions were a band concert, baseball game, platform dance, carnival, and a fireworks display.¹⁹ Finally, the Recorder praised the pool in a detailed report on July 4. "Holton's new swimming pool in Rafter's Park is now a going concern... Joe Strohwig, who with WPA labor constructed the pool and beautiful bath house, was radiant over the final completion of the project. So was Mayor Chester Bidwell. And they deserve the satisfaction to be derived from seeing their dream child grown into actuality. If there are finer public swimming pools, they would be hard to find. Concealed lights around the edge below the water level produce a pretty sight. Lights on the turrets and around the pool are ample and brilliant."²⁰

The Holton city band gave its first concert on the roof of the bath house June 30. Local residents expected many visitors from other towns and the surrounding country to try the pool during the summer and enjoy its advantages. Fortunately, the pool was ready for swimmers just as hot summer weather arrived.²¹

¹⁶ "WPA Makes Possible A Fine Modern Swimming Pool For This Community," Signal 29 October 1936, p. 1, col. 2-5. Several features proposed in the park improvement plan were never constructed. A southern pond, Rafter's Pond, was never completed so the caretaker's house and a shelter house planned for Rafter's Pond were never constructed. A proposed band stand was not constructed. Only a single shelter house on the west side of Elkhorn Lake (north of the Bath House and Swimming Pool) was constructed.

¹⁷ "Pool Will Not Be Completed This Summer," Signal 10 June 1937, p. 1, col. 3.

¹⁸ "Lease on Swimming Pool to Ottawa Man," Holton Recorder 9 June 1938, p. 1, col. 5.

¹⁹ "Legion To Sponsor Fourth Celebration," Recorder 9 June 1938, p. 1, col. 6; Recorder 27 June 1938, p. 5, cols. 4-7; "Come In Town and Help Us Celebrate," Recorder 20 June 1938, p. 1, col. 6.

²⁰ "Swimming Pool At Last in Operation," Recorder 4 July 1938, p. 1, col. 1.

²¹ "Swimming Pool At Last in Operation," Recorder 4 July 1938, p. 1, col. 1.

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Between two and three thousand visitors filled Rafter's Park on the fourth of July. They enjoyed the water sports, the fireworks, the stage program, the carnival rides, and the platform dancing. The pool was filled with swimmers all day and evening.²² A photograph of Holton's "new modern swimming pool" appeared in the Recorder on July 18, 1938.

For nearly fifty years, the WPA swimming pool and bath house served the people of Holton, but age and subterranean water pressure caused significant deterioration. After some eighteen months of analysis, a newspaper article in 1985 summarized the problems. Over the years, the swimming pool walls had cracked, the stone bleachers had "wrinkled," and the diving tower leaned. Much of the damage had been caused by hydrostatic pressure. Poor drainage of the soil around the structure caused the pressure which damaged the pool.²³

Other alterations were needed to meet modern safety requirements. To replace the original diving tower rising from the pool itself with one and three-meter diving boards mounted on the end, the north end of the pool would have to be lengthened and deepened by more than two feet. The original wading pool also did not meet modern state safety standards. Finally, access to the pool would have to be improved for Americans with disabilities.²⁴ To finance these changes, city leaders asked for a bond issue raising \$600,000 for improvements to the Holton swimming pool. Although construction of an entirely new swimming pool was considered, they considered this a more expensive choice than improving the historic facility.

A few days before the bond election, the editor of the Holton Recorder argued for the improvements and explained the importance of the pool as a community asset. "The city pool... is in desperate need of repair to guarantee that it continues to be both a safe and functional facility... the pool will probably be closed within three to four years unless it is substantially renovated." As the editor described, "it is an emotional issue for those who grew up in Holton. Beyond the simple pleasures of summers spent at the pool, there is the matter of pride. When newcomers are given a tour of Holton, it is a safe bet that one of the first stops will be at the city pool. Former residents who return for a visit rarely miss a swing by the pool for a healthy dose of nostalgia. It is a part of our lives."²⁵

With the value of the pool in mind, the editor suggested that voters make a commitment to "one of Holton's finest assets" in the upcoming election. In the April 2, 1985 election, Holton voters decisively approved the plan to save the swimming pool by a vote of 722 for and only 232 against the bond issue.²⁶ Residents had to overcome one more obstacle before the swimming pool improvements could move forward. When bids were opened February 19, 1986, only two contractors submitted bids and both were more than \$100,000 over the \$600,000 estimate. Don Novak, of Novak and Lay Engineers, who had

²² "People Enjoy the Fourth Celebration," Recorder 7 July 1938, p. 1, col. 1.

²³ "Plan Long Time Coming," Recorder 21 March 1985, p. 1, cols. 1-2.

²⁴ "Plan Long Time Coming," Recorder 21 March 1985, p. 1, cols. 1-2.

²⁵ "More To Issue Than Renovation," Recorder, 28 March 1985, p. 2, cols. 1-2.

²⁶ "Bond Issue Gets Voter Support," Recorder 4 April 1985, p. 1, cols. 1-2.

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prepared the plans and estimate for the improvements, could not explain the difference between the bids and the earlier estimate. After city leaders recognized the problem, they decided to propose a new \$800,000 bond issue to the voters.²⁷ Once again, the swimming pool bond issue won majority support, but this time by a lesser margin of only 524 in favor and 470 against.

The Holton Bath House, Filter House and Swimming Pool were improved in 1986 and has continued to be an important recreational facility for residents of Holton and Jackson County since that time. The City of Holton is proposing this nomination to recognize the facility's historic significance and to qualify for state and federal financial incentives for the rehabilitation of historic structures.

²⁷ "Bids Top Estimates; City \$200,000 Short," Recorder 6 March 1986, p. 1, cols. 3-6.

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"Park Improvement Plan to be Presented to Voters," Jackson County Signal 26 March 1936, p. 1, cols. 3-4.

"People Enjoy The Fourth Celebration," Holton Recorder, 7 July 1938, p. 1, col. 1.

"Plan Long Time Coming," Holton Recorder 21 March 1985, p. 1, cols. 1-2.

"Pool Will Not Be Completed," Jackson County Signal 10 June 1937, p. 1, col. 3.

"Swimming Pool Assured Holton," Jackson County Signal 23 January 1936, p. 1, col. 6.

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Photographs

Municipal Swimming Pool, Holton, Kansas (5) Beck-Bookman Library Collections, Holton, Kansas.

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Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool
Holton, Jackson County, KS

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated district consists of a tract of land less than one acre in Rafter's Park, Holton, Jackson County, Kansas. Rafter's Park includes the area originally platted as Blocks 5 & 6, Vetter's Third Addition, Lots 90-112 even, Lots 85-111 odd including Nebraska Avenue, Lots 100-112, and Lots 99-111, Kansas Avenue. The boundary of the nominated district begins at the northwest corner of the Holton swimming pool fence and runs east along the fence to the northeast corner, then south along the fence line to the southeast corner of the concrete slab bordering the former wading pool, then west to the southwest corner of the concrete slab bordering the bath house, then north to the swimming pool fence and north to the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries are limited to the immediate vicinity of the swimming pool (as described above) and do not include the greater Rafter's Park. Rafter's Park has not been fully surveyed to determine what New Deal-era Resources are extant, however, the nominated property is the most intact New Deal-era resource in the park.

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PHOTOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Holton Bath House and Swimming Pool, Holton, Jackson County, Kansas

Photographer: Dale Nimz
1928 Countryside Lane, Lawrence, KS 66044

Location of digital negatives: Kansas Historic Preservation Office

- Photo 1: view from west southwest, 6/27/2008.
- Photo 2: view of entrance from south, 6/27/2008.
- Photo 3: view from east southeast, 6/27/2008.
- Photo 4: view from east northeast, 6/27/2008.
- Photo 5: view of shelter house from east, 6/27/2008.
- Photo 6: view from northeast, 6/27/2008.
- Photo 7: view from northeast, 6/27/2008.
- Photo 8: view of wading pool and Filter House from southeast, 6/27/2008.
- Photo 9: view from southwest, 6/27/2008.
- Photo10: view of Filter House from southeast, 6/27/2008.
- Photo 11: view of Filter House from northeast, 6/27/2008.
- Photo 12: view of Filter House from northwest, 6/27/2008.
- Photo 13: view of primary entrance from north, 6/27/2008.
- Photo 14: view of entrance hall to pool from west, 6/27/2008.
- Photo 15: view of hallway to women's dressing room from west, 6/28/2008.
- Photo 16: view of women's dressing room from west, 6/27/2008.
- Photo 17: view of men's dressing room from east, 6/27/2008.
- Photo 18: view of basket room window, 6/27/2008.

Holton Bath House
& Swimming Pool
15: 264220 E
4372050 N

BLAINE 44 MI.
18 MI. TO KANS. 63

