

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Leeper Park
other names/site number 141-546-29257,58,81

2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by St. Joseph River on north and east, Park Ln and N/A ☐ not for publication
city or town Bartlett Streets on the south, east property line of properties to the west. N/A ☐ vicinity
state Indiana code IN county St. Joseph code 141 zip code 46601

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 36CFR 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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ 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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Leeper Park

St. Joseph IN

Name of Property

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
☒ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4	1	buildings
0	0	sites
9	2	structures
1	0	objects
14	3	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION/CULTURE: Outdoor Recreation

LANDSCAPE: Park

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION/CULTURE: Outdoor Recreation

LANDSCAPE: Park

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Victorian landscape

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation EARTH

walls BRICK

CONCRETE

roof

other STONE

Narrative Description

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

Leeper Park _____

Name of Property _____

St. Joseph _____ IN _____

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 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.)

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.)

9. Major Bibliographic 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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE _____

Period of Significance

1895-1940 _____

Significant Dates

1895 _____

1905 _____

1912 _____

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A _____

Cultural Affiliation

N/A _____

Architect/Builder

Kessler, George Edward: Landscape Architect _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

City of South Bend: Parks Dept, Engineering Dept. _____

Leeper Park _____
Name of Property

St. Joseph _____ IN _____
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property _____ 25 _____

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	6
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5	6	2	6	2	0
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4	6	1	5	1	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone

Easting

Northing

3

1	6
---	---

5	6	2	4	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	6	1	4	8	6	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone

Easting

Northing

2

1	6
---	---

5	6	2	6	6	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	6	1	4	8	7	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

4

1	6
---	---

5	6	2	4	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	6	1	5	0	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

☒ 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 Malcolm Cairns, ASLA, Associate Professor _____
organization Department of Landscape Architecture _____ date 1-6-98 _____
street & number Ball State University _____ telephone 765/285-1982 _____
city or town Muncie _____ state Indiana _____ zip code 47306 _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

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

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name City of South Bend: Park and Recreation Department _____
street & number 301 S. St. Louis Boulevard _____ telephone 219/237-9194 _____
city or town South Bend _____ state Indiana _____ zip code 46601 _____

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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Land Acquisition

Land around the pumping station was used for park purposes as early as 1897; the grounds were named Leeper Park in 1900. Original land purchases were expanded in 1901 extending the park boundaries to the St. Joseph River, including a small island north of the riverbank. In 1901 a public right of way was acquired, allowing the extension of water lines west of Michigan St. to Lafayette Blvd. This right of way, named Foote Street, is now Park Lane. In 1902 the land north of Foote Street, extending to the St. Joseph River, between Michigan and Lafayette Blvd. was donated to the City. A final tract of land west of Lafayette Blvd. extending to the eastern boundary of the Chapin Park subdivision was acquired in 1906. A Landfill in 1922 created by filling a slough between the mainland and a small island in the St. Joseph River brought the park acreage to the current 25 acres.

Improvements

In 1901 the grounds of the Pumping Station were seeded, and flowers planted. In 1902 a lily pond was constructed in the Central Section of the Park; this original pond was replaced by the digging of 2 lagoons in 1907. The western lagoon was known as the duck pond; the eastern one, a lily pond. A rustic carriage bridge was also constructed, crossing the lily pond. A bridge to the Island had been constructed in a rustic style in 1902, opening up the island for use as a picnic ground. A small zoo was also established in 1902 in the Eastern section. In 1904 a log cabin was relocated to this area of the park; it became known as the Navarre cabin, associated with the founder of South Bend, Pierre Navarre. 1904 also brought the construction of a park drive along the riverfront extending along the eastern section and under the old Leeper (Michigan St.) Bridge. The drive was extended through the center section of the park from 1904-1907. These drives were renamed Riverside Drive in 1909. Other improvements to the park from 1905-1910 included development of a garden and fountain in the central section, the fencing of the duckpond, the construction of walks and macadamed drives, and the addition of playground equipment. These early improvements were guided by plans for the park prepared by superintendent Herman Beyer in 1905.

In 1911 the Board of Park Commissioners hired George Kessler to prepare a master plan for the development of a park and boulevard system for the City. That plan, published in 1912, called for the expansion of Leeper Park, which was to become the centerpiece of the South Bend Park system. The Kessler Plan called for Riverside Drive to be extended along the St. Joseph River, connecting up and down-river parks, and to the urban boulevards extending to the outer and neighborhood parks of the City. The Kessler master plan was supplemented by detailed plans for individual parks, including one for Leeper Park (1915). This detailed plan, overlaid with earlier developments created during the Beyer years, would guide Leeper Park development for an additional decade.

A wading pool was constructed in the Eastern section in 1911. In 1912, the western section of the Park was graded; Riverside Drive was extended from Lafayette Blvd. to Park Avenue. In 1914 Lafayette Boulevard and Riverside Drive were placed in the jurisdiction of the Parks Department. Curbs and gutters were installed and the Drive was lighted with boulevard lighting supplied by the George Cutter Company. Cutter lighting fixtures were also installed on the new Michigan Street bridge and along Riverside Drive from Lafayette Boulevard to Hudson Street.

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The Leeper Park zoo was removed from the Park in 1914. The banks of the St. Joseph were also improved that year with limestone blocks and rip-rap in conjunction with the construction of a new bridge. The Michigan Street bridge replaced the iron Leeper Bridge in 1915. In 1915 the Park drives were remodelled in the center section, to conform to the Kessler Plan for the Park. Additional plans by George Kessler refined drive relocations in the center section. In 1918 a stone wall along the eastern section riverbank was constructed, using cutstone from the Michigan Central Railroad right-of-way. The Kessler Plan also guided the development of active recreation facilities for Leeper Park. In 1915 tennis courts, baseball and football fields and a playground were developed in the western section of the Park. A 1500' toboggan run was also a feature of this portion of the park. In 1916 a circular, sunken garden was constructed in the eastern section, partially surrounded by a curving pergola (1918). The garden was planted in daylilies centered around a sundial. An additional formal garden area was developed in 1919, extending the axis of Main St. into the Park. The Kessler era improvements were completed in 1922 with the creation of 2 additional acres of parkland by filling a shallow slough which separated a small island in the St. Joseph from the mainland of the Park. A 100' x 200' Rose Garden was created east of the Pumping Station in 1922, as well.

George Kessler passed away in 1923; improvements to Leeper Park continued in the 1920's and 1930's. In 1924 the sunken garden was redesigned in the landfill area of the eastern section; 700 roses were planted. Works Projects Administration (WPA) funded labor for several projects in Leeper Park. In 1936, a retaining wall faced with scrap salvage concrete was constructed around the island and the channel of the slough was dredged. In 1938 a shelter house near the tennis courts was also built with WPA labor. The three well-house structures which now serve as eastern section restrooms, the Zeigler performing center, and a folly in the center section, were constructed c. 1930-40. The Zeigler center was dedicated in 1940. A Fragrance Garden was added to this area of the park in 1955.

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7. Description of Existing Conditions Related to Historic Designed Landscape Features.

Topography and Natural Features: The site was once a low-lying floodplain area. Historic records indicate that portions of the site have been raised and levelled. The banks of the St. Joseph have been stabilized in the center and west sections with limestone blocks. In the east section, earthwork has been created to blend the large covered reservoir with the surrounding land. In the west section created landforms have been installed to create the level court and playfield area, and to provide the roadway connection to the Chapin Park Addition. The steep east-facing slope of the Addition forms the visual and physical western boundary of the park. In the central section, a pronounced, shaped terrace defines the area in which the excavated Duck Pond is located. Other topographic features include the rounded bowl of the sunken garden, and subtle earthwork which once defined the area where the wading pool was located.

Spatial Organization, Views and Vistas. The site is primarily a canopied open space. Openings in the tree canopy exist at the sunken garden, the duckpond, and the playfield and court areas. The Park was designed to provide views of the river from a number of locations. Vistas include the views approaching the park from Main Street, where there is a view of the central formal garden, and from Lafayette Boulevard, where the view terminates at the River.

Vegetation: A mixture of native and planted species exists on the site. Trees are planted throughout, with little obvious massing or clumping. Cottonwood, Sycamore, Sugar and Soft Maples predominate. Crabapples provide accents, planted near the Navarre cabin, Michigan St. bridge, and along Park Lane. Shrub plantings referred to in historic documentation no longer exist. Only remnants of the once extensive flower gardens remain.

Circulation: Riverside Drive proceeds through the site as planned by the Kessler remodeling of the earlier carriage loop featured in the 1905 Beyer plan. Only portions of the Kessler walk system were ever constructed; a fragment remains in the playground area of the center section.

Water Features: The Duck Pond remains in its historic location, although extensively remodelled during the 1980's and 90's. The site is worn and functional in appearance. The second lagoon in the center section no longer exists. Additional water features included the pool in the eastern section of which only the concrete edge remains, and the wading pool and trellised arbor, which has been removed. Water spigots, and wells associated with the City Waterworks, exist throughout the Park, reinforcing the connection between the Waterworks and Park functions of Leeper Park.

Structures: The North Pumping Station, its associated cistern and underground reservoir remain as landmarks in Leeper Park. Three smaller brick structures, built apparently as well-houses (c1930-1940) also exist. One serves as the staging structure for the Zeigler Performance Center, the second as a restroom facility for the Navarre cabin area, the third is closed, and exists as a folly in the center area. All three are in the Georgian Revival style and feature carefully detailed brickwork, with limestone accents and trim. The Navarre cabin was rebuilt in the park in 1904, and has been subsequently relocated and repositioned. The structure appears in good condition and is used for historic re-creations and other interpretative events. The shelterhouse built with WPA labor has been removed, replaced by tennis court expansion and the recreation building (c.1970). The Wading pool

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and Trellised Arbor have also been removed (c.1970) from the eastern section.

The Michigan Street or Leeper Bridge was constructed in 1915, replacing an older iron truss bridge over the St. Joseph. The arched concrete bridge is detailed in the Classic revival style. While not designed by George Kessler, the Michigan Street bridge is similar to those Kessler designed for the park system in Indianapolis. Kessler plans often featured bridges in the classic style as civic monuments and gateways. The bridge is a compliment to the North Pumping Station, and together the two form an important component of the Park as civic improvement aspect of the Kessler City Beautiful plan for Leeper Park. Foundation or abutment stones from the original bridge were used to line the riverbank west of the new bridge

Site Furnishings: Western section: Historic backstop fencing remains hidden by underbrush in the northeast corner of the playfield. Center section: concrete steps remain from Kessler era improvement to the Duck Pond Area. The Reynolds fountain, a historic watering trough installed in the park in 1937, remains at the terminus of Main Street. The stone block wall installed to stabilize the riverbank west of the Michigan Rd. Bridge remains, in poor condition. Eastern Section: concrete steps remain leading from the Michigan Bridge approach to the sunken Garden. The bridge to the Island has been rebuilt on historic stone piers. The retaining wall built around the island by WPA-funded labor also remains; most of this extensive wall is in good repair, although several sections have broken and failed. Several historic light fixtures remain along Riverside Drive; the boulevard lights feature concrete posts and lamps manufactured by the George Cutter Company.

Intrusions into the District

- a. Work yard, east of pumping station, while a traditional use, has been expanded to encroach on area previously used as rose garden.
- b. Playgrounds in eastern and central sections are not located where this type of facility was historically located. Contemporary materials are somewhat inappropriate in these settings.
- c. Traditional light fixtures have been replaced and/or augmented with additional institutional type cobra head lighting on wooden telephone poles.
- d. Recreation building at Tennis Complex is of 1970's brick/wood mansard style. Location and use of structure, however conforms to stated Kessler master plan for western section.
- e. An additional row of 4 tennis courts replaced open lawn area and original playground. Tennis, however, in this location is appropriate to Kessler Master Plan.

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Site Plan.

Key:

Buildings:

B1: North Pumping Station
B2: Wellhouse 1
B3: Wellhouse 3

photo

1
3
5

B4: Navarre Cabin
B5: Wellhouse 2
B6: Recreation Building

photo

2
4

Structures:

S1: Michigan St. Bridge
S2: Retaining Wall
S3: Cistern
S4: Duckpond
S5: Tennis Courts
S6: Steps
S7: Steps

6
7
10
12

S8: Pedestrian Bridge
S9: Sunken Garden Landform
S10: Covered Reservoir
S11: Riverside Drive

8
9
11

Objects

O1: Reynolds Fountain
O2: Light Fixture (typ)

13
14

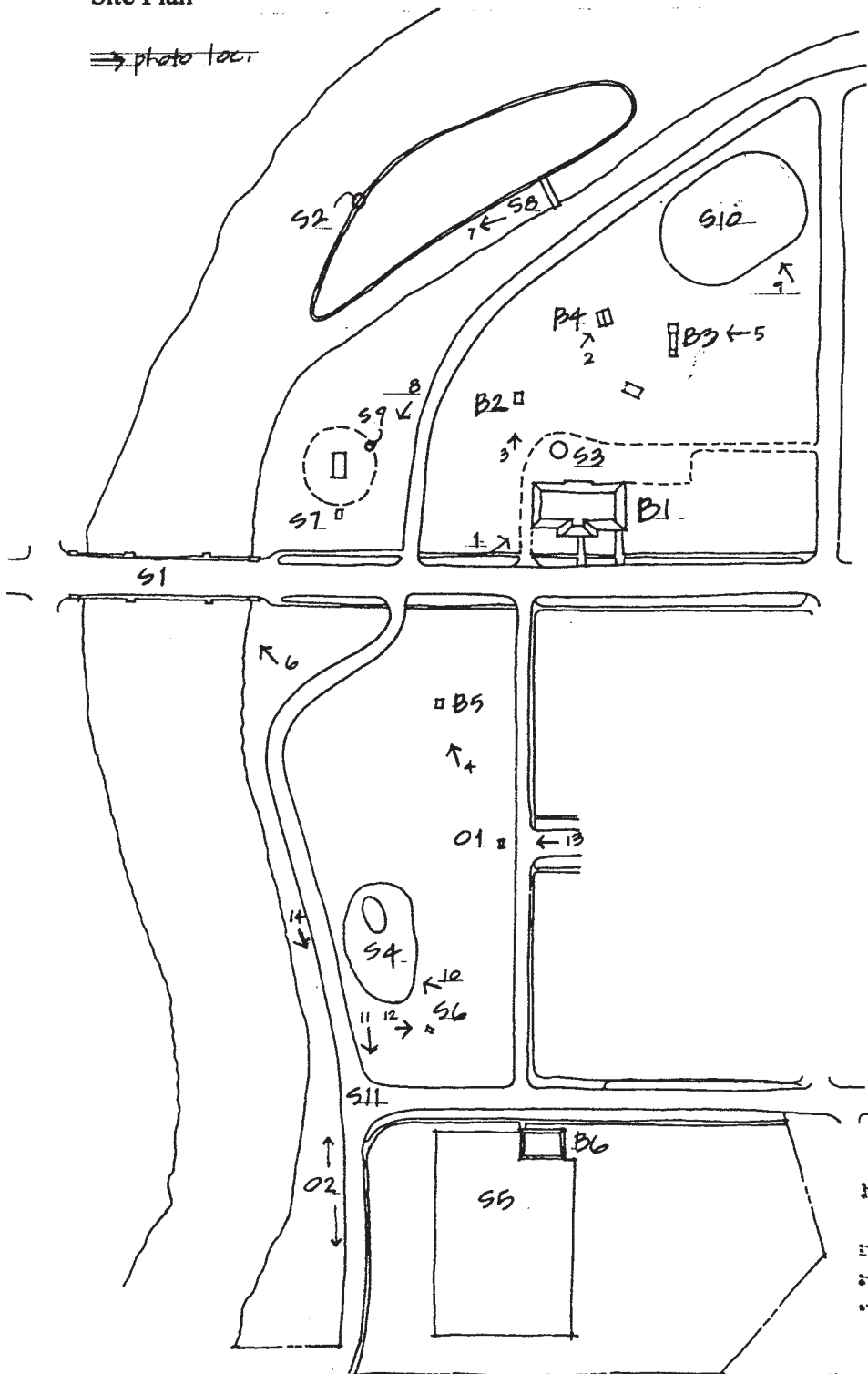
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Site Plan

→ photo loc.



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8. Statement of Significance

Context Statement:

Historic Context: Public Parks

The nineteenth century romantic or naturalistic era in the arts revered the American landscape. The veneration of natural and regional landscapes was one way of representing the strong populist and democratic political values that existed in the United States during the middle decades of the century. These political and social influences and their related aesthetic produced a uniquely American designed landscape--the public park.

Unlike their counterparts in Europe, American public parks were not rooted in royal domain; beginning with the design for Central Park in New York (1858) by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. and Calvert Vaux, parks were created which represented the perceived value of preserving or creating natural (or naturalistic) outdoor spaces for the enjoyment and well-being of the people. Fundamental to the design of these public places was the presumed uplifting effect of rural scenery. This philosophy was translated by artists such as Olmsted into actual landscapes that emulated nature, bringing naturalistic or rural scenery to the residents of densely populated, often dirty and polluted cities. Parks were soon recognized as therapeutic escapes from the congested city. The provision of parks as urban necessities for mental and physical breathing room was soon widely accepted and practiced in large and small cities alike.

The earliest parks designed in the mid-19th century were conceived as singular elements. By the 1880's the concept of public parkland was extended to the planning and design of interconnected systems of parks: large and small open spaces woven together with a system of parkways and boulevards. Early examples of these park systems include Chicago's West Parks (Jenney, 1869) and South Parks (Olmsted and Vaux, 1869), the Emerald Necklace of Boston (Eliot, 1890), and the Minneapolis Park System (Cleveland, 1883). By the turn of the century, organizations such as the American Park and Outdoor Art Association promoted the development of urban park systems which provided opportunity for passive enjoyment of natural scenery, the protection of rapidly declining urban natural areas such as stream corridors, and the efficient planning of cities around a coordinated system of parks and boulevards. The City Beautiful Movement which followed the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 further embraced the ideal of planning cities to include a network of parks and open space. The work of George Kessler is notable in the extension of the City Beautiful Ideal to the civic designs for the park systems of Kansas City, Denver, Dallas, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis. The notoriety and popularity of the park and boulevards of large American cities led to the emulation of these landscapes in small cities as well. Additional social movements were influential in the development of the American public park. Once reserved for passive enjoyment of nature, parks

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also become places for active recreation in the early years of the 20th century as interests in sports and playgrounds evolved. Urban conditions of the industrial revolution and of an increasingly poor and immigrant population spawned reform movements such as that led by Jane Addams in Chicago. Community Centers, public recreation facilities, and other facilities aimed at improving the public health and welfare soon became integral to the urban park.

The typical early 20th century urban park combined the concepts of a rural retreat, preservation or creation of natural scenery, opportunities for public gathering and discourse, provision of active recreation facilities and community centers, often within a network of parks and boulevards which provided ease of access to the parks and a framework for the well planned city. Stylistically and aesthetically, these parks combined formal elements such as public gardens and promenades with the pastoral and picturesque scenery associated with the earlier rural parks. Products of rapidly developing concepts, 19th and early 20th century parks were not static elements of the urban landscape; they were often overlays of sequential designs. Carefully planned additions or improvements to early rural parks added components of active recreation, field houses, community centers and other public facilities as these social movements were more fully developed. Most importantly, parks and park and boulevard systems became elements around which planned residential and commercial development flourished. Seen as the structural framework for urban development, large and small cities alike embraced to concept of park planning and design to further the "City Beautiful" ideal.

It is in this context that the contributions of George Kessler can be appreciated. Kessler was born in Germany in 1862, and immigrated to Texas with his parents. He returned to Weimar where he studied landscape gardening and civil engineering. He returned to New York in 1882, and upon an introduction by Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. was hired by a Kansas City real estate firm to develop subdivision plans for the suburb of Hyde Park. Subsequent subdivision work included Roland Park in Baltimore (1891), Euclid Heights in Cleveland and a development in Ogden, Utah. These projects were soon followed by the commission to prepare a plan for a park and boulevard system for Kansas City, soon followed by a similar plan for Memphis. After completing the landscape design for the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904, park system designs were also prepared for Indianapolis (1905); Cincinnati (1906); Denver (1907); and Oklahoma City (1910). The Kessler designed City Plan of Dallas was published in 1911. The notoriety of these park and city plans brought even more commissions to the Kessler firm, including plans for St. Joseph, Missouri, and a number of park plans for Indiana cities: Ft. Wayne, Terre Haute, and South Bend. At the time of his death in 1923, Kessler was continuing his work for the City of Indianapolis with the design of an outer ring of parks and boulevards and the campus plan Butler University.

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An analysis of Kessler's work reveals a careful combination of the creation of parks as pastoral retreats, as healthy places of active recreation, and as devices for guiding the planned development of cities. Kessler's aesthetic combined both the romantic style of earlier Victorian parks, and the formal renaissance styles favored by landscape architects after the world's Columbian Exposition of 1893. Kessler is primarily known for his successful landscape planning efforts; his work expanded the young profession of landscape architecture in this regard.

Kessler design principles

Park planning work undertaken by Kessler is consistently comprised of interconnected Parks and Boulevards proposed as planned elements of the coordinated city plan. In many cases the park and boulevard plan was proposed as the framework for subsequent city expansion. Kessler plans used natural features, especially rivers and streams to unify the park and boulevard system. The park plans, themselves, combined formal and informal elements, and incorporated provisions for both passive and active recreation, including provision for baseball, golf, swimming, tennis courts, and childrens play. Community centers which combined both indoor and outdoor recreation and other public facilities are also common. Road and Path alignments feature sweeping, complex radial curves, similar to the 19th century German and French designs of Lenne and Alphand, with transitions near buildings and on small, geometric sites to Beaux Arts Classicism. Plantings are massed to form open lawn spaces. Boulevards are typically planted with single or multiple rows of trees. Larger sites of informally massed plantings are bordered at street edges by linear street-tree plantings. Many prominent street corners, intersections and street termini feature vistas, focal points, or other landscape or architectural features. Architectural/Engineering elements, such as bridges, pavilions, colonnades were also designed by Kessler in the classical revival style common during the City Beautiful era which followed the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893.

A designer for the progressive era, Kessler's plans and writing called for parks to be places for community. His plan for Leeper park represents many aspects of George Kessler's design philosophy. The park was to be an integral part of the riverway park system and would be connected with outer parks and boulevards; the park would be oriented to the River, and bring the water into the park through a series of lagoons; the park would incorporate active and passive recreation, a "splendid playfield, and in this it would be wise to establish a complete equipment for all out-door sports. There should be an adequate shelter building as a field house."* In these words Kessler foresaw the eventual use of Leeper Park as the playground for the James Madison School (1930), the YWCA (1928) and the site of subsequent indoor and outdoor recreation facilities developed sympathy with the Kessler vision well into the 1960's.

* *George Kessler: Annual Report, Department of Public Works. South Bend, 1913.*

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Statement of Significance

Leeper Park should be considered significant as determined by Criteria "C": "The 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." The Park is an outstanding example of the landscape planning and design for a small city park of the City Beautiful era of American landscape architectural design. The design combines aspects of city-planning, landscape planning for a network of parks and boulevards, and incorporates both early 20th century formalism and earlier principles of pastoral park planning. The Kessler and earlier Beyer designs for Leeper Park provided the quintessential components of the City Park: informally landscaped areas for passive recreation, a system of curvilinear paths for strolling, a driveway system for the new recreational form of driving for pleasure, playfields and playgrounds for active recreation and formal landscape features such as gardens and broad terraces for public gatherings. The Kessler plan for Leeper Park was envisioned as the centerpiece of the South Bend system. Its drives would connect to others along the riverway park system, and lead past the City Waterworks to the neo-classically designed Michigan Street Bridge. Leeper Park provided the citizens of South Bend with a front porch to the St. Joseph River, and an appropriate setting for the City's waterwork facilities.

In considering the historic significance of Leeper Park, dates were selected which cover all eras of the Parks history: early history 1895-1911; Kessler era: 1912-1923; 1924-1940: implementation of the Kessler plan, including additions through WPA era improvements.

The early design for the Park by Herman Beyer in 1905 represents the skilled work of a local master gardener. Beyer had been the landscape gardener for the estate landscape owned by James Oliver, a prominent South Bend industrialist. This Victorian Park plan developed and implemented by Beyer was simple in its layout, but was carefully related to the river, the city's street pattern, and the intended use as a public pleasure ground. A skilled plantsman, Beyer's contribution to Leeper Park included shaping the land from what had been not much more than a slough, extensive plantings, the creation of early lagoons with planted borders and water plantings, and the characteristic use of the late Victorian era flower beddings, seats, and other architectural embellishments.

The association of Leeper Park with George Kessler places the Park and its South Bend park companions in elite company. George Kessler was at the height of his career during the years he was associated with the City. His hiring, and the subsequent implementation of the Kessler plan (1912) for South Bend Parks was a source of great civic pride, the product of which is a well-defined parkway system along the St. Joseph River accented by park facilities along the way. The Leeper Park design by Kessler in 1915 proposed a skillful remodelling of the earlier Beyer layout. The drive layout was reworked to include a continuous river driveway. The walkway system featured signature Kessler sweeping curves, Y intersections, and careful transitions to incorporate formal design elements into the plan. The 3 distinct sections of the Park, each with their own structured recreation

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facilities were woven together by the circulation layout. The Wading Pool, the Formal Garden, and the Playfields and Courts became integral parts of the overall composition. The Garden, a reworking of the earlier Main Street axial entry into the Park from Main Street, extended the street vista into the park with parallel walks and central garden layout, utilizing forms similar to other Kessler formal gardens in Indianapolis at Garfield Park and University Park, both also designed in 1915. The Kessler plan for the park was implemented over several decades. The last improvements to the park made during the Depression: street work, retaining walls and recreation pavilion were sensitive extensions of the Kessler design.

Leeper Park is South Bend's first designed public park. The Park was designed to be a community gathering place, the setting for the City's Waterworks, and to provide access to the St. Joseph River as a place for both active and passive recreation. Its local significance through its early design and implementation by Herman Beyer, is elevated to statewide prominence through the planning and design work of George Kessler. The Parks of South Bend as integrated components of an overall park and boulevard plan, represent the translation of metropolitan park planning and design principles during the late Victorian and City Beautiful eras of American landscape architecture in larger cities such as Chicago, Boston, and Kansas City, to smaller cities of the midwest. The City of South Bend progressively commissioned George Kessler, one of the country's most distinguished park planners, develop these plans. The planning and design for Leeper Park is important to the cohesiveness of the overall plan. The collection of interrelated South Bend parks and boulevards is also an important component in the statewide inventory of Kessler designed parks which also includes multiple sites in Indianapolis, Ft. Wayne, and Terre Haute.

Historic Integrity

Leeper Park has maintained its historic boundaries, and its setting near the northern edge of the downtown area. It is flanked by 2 of the City's several historic residential districts, and overlooks a third on the north shore of the River. Some encroachment in setting has occurred with the expansion of Memorial Hospital, cutting off the continuity of Main Street from the Park to Downtown, and in off-site views of the Hospital's parking lots. The neighboring Madison School and the YWCA, however, remain as traditional visual and functional adjuncts for the Park. The design of Leeper Park is an amalgam of the Beyer and Kessler Plans for the site. The Drives of the Park, portions of walkway, entry steps and garden features remain in their historic location as remodelled in the Kessler era. Traces of the older carriage lanes, removed as the Kessler plan was implemented remain in the spacing of trees in the center section.

The three distinct sections of the park remain and retain their historic landuses. The eastern section is primarily a passive park and garden area, providing the setting for the North pumping station and interpretive areas of the Navarre Cabin and Zeigler Performing Center. The riverbank and Island retain their historic pastoral character. The center section of the park is centered around the Duck Pond, which coupled with the former location of formal gardens served as the Park's front yard. Coupled with the addition of a playground (which is a slight intrusion into the historic fabric of the

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park), these areas still serve as locations for community gatherings. The western section of the park was improved for the purposes of providing active recreation components for the Park. These traditional uses remain, and even the construction of the modern-era community building does not detract from this area of the park's historic function and visual appearance. The park retains its historic feeling of a shaded respite, accented by the formal and active recreation features of the park landscape.

In summary, Leeper Park retains its historic boundaries, setting, functions, basic landscape structure, and associated feeling. The layout of the Park reflects the substantial implementation of a George Kessler design, and the overall feeling or atmosphere of the park is consistent with historic photographs of the site. The Park was not one where detailed landscape construction, structures and features were of great importance. The details which have been lost are primarily plantings: shrub massing, ornamental trees, and the several formal garden areas of the Park. These details are not irrevocable losses. The pastoral landscape of trees and lawn, contrasted with formal entry treatments, gardens, and site features associated with the Kessler plan for the Park, the curvilinear Drive which unites the park and connects it to its residential neighbors, and the continued visual and physical connection to the St. Joseph River all reinforce the historic integrity of the Leeper Park landscape. Finally the association of Leeper Park with the Michigan Street Bridge, and especially with the National Register-listed North Pumping Station, its associated cistern and reservoir, wellhouses, active water wells, etc. preserves the historic association of Leeper Park with the City's civic development of its public works and waterworks facilities. This combination of public works as civic monuments, and the provision of an interconnected system of parks and boulevards for the residents of South Bend well-represents the City Beautiful Ideal as expressed in the work of George Kessler.

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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description: The boundaries of the Leeper Park Historic District shall include all of the land area known as Leeper Park, and all adjacent public rights-of-way described as follows. Beginning at the extension of the south r.o.w. line of Bartlett Street intersecting with the St. Joseph River, extending westward to the west r.o.w. line of Michigan Street, northward to the south r.o.w. line of Park Lane, westward to the east r.o.w. line of Lafayette Boulevard; southward to the north r.o.w. line of Bartlett Street. Then, crossing Lafayette Boulevard and following the rear property lines of lots on the north side of Lamont Terrace to the crest of the slope paralleling the east property lines of lots east of Park Avenue in the Chapin Park Addition; then following the south and east property boundaries of Chapin Park lots on DuShane Place to Riverside Drive. The boundary then crosses Riverside Drive, and proceeds northward to the St. Joseph River along the east property line of the Chapin Park Addition. The Boundary of the district then follows the south bank of the River to the west line of the Michigan Street Bridge, then north across the River to the north line of the Bridge, then east, crossing Michigan Road to the east line of the Bridge. Boundary then follows the east line of the Bridge, south across the River to the south bank, and, including the Island east of the Bridge, proceeds east then southeast and south along the south bank of the River to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification: Boundaries have been described to include both the parkland itself and its adjacent street rights-of-way. The street frontages are important to the definition of park edges, the relationship of park to neighborhood, and the inclusion of these streets as components of the Kessler Park and Boulevard Plan. The slope (in private property) along the western boundary of the park is important in the preservation of the visual enclosure the wooded topography provides. The Michigan St. Bridge is included within the district boundary; its construction is concurrent with the Kessler Plan for Leeper Park, and the combination of Park and Civic monument is important in the accomplishment of the City Beautiful ideal for the Park.

UTM References

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|----|----|--------|---------|
| 5. | 16 | 562140 | 4615000 |
| 6. | 16 | 562140 | 4614840 |
| 7. | 16 | 561960 | 4614830 |
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District Boundaries

