

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 Sunset Park Pavilion

other names/site number Sunset Park Shelter House/"Pagoda"

2. Location

street & number Sunset Park (411 SE Riverside Drive) N/A not for publication

city or town Evansville N/A vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Vanderburgh code 163 zip code 47713

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.)

Patrick R. Roberts 4-28-92
 Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
 State of 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: | 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:) | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

Sunset Park Pavilion
Name of Property

vanderburgh, Indiana
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 1 | 0 | buildings |
| 0 | 0 | sites |
| 0 | 0 | structures |
| 0 | 0 | objects |
| 1 | 0 | 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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION & CULTURE: Outdoor
Recreation

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT: Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

CRAFTSMAN

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls CONCRETE

roof TERRA COTTA

other WOOD

METAL; iron

Narrative Description

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

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.)

- Criteria A, B, C (checked), D

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A, B, C, D, E, F, G

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1912

Significant Dates

1912

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Harry E. Boyle/Charles F. Kleiderer & Co.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

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):

- Criteria for previous documentation on file

Primary location of additional data:

- Criteria for primary location of additional data

Name of repository:

Historic Preservation Services City of Evansville, Indiana

Sunset Park Pavilion

Name of Property

Van Buren, Indiana

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approx. .1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 449590 4201970
Zone Easting Northing

3
Zone Easting Northing
4
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joan C. Marchand, Historic Preservation Officer

organization City of Evansville, Indiana date 11-07-91

street & number 216 Washington Avenue telephone 812/428-0737

city or town Evansville, state IN zip code 47713

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 Evansville

street & number 100 East Walnut Street telephone

city or town Evansville, state IN zip code 47708

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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The Sunset Park Pavilion was an element of a program undertaken in 1912 to improve Evansville's riverfront park, one of half a dozen or so municipal recreational spots at the time. Work included renovating park furniture, refurbishing crushed stone walks, adding new plantings, and terracing the river bank. The key element of the program, however, was the construction of a shelter house at the north end of the park overlooking the river. Executed in reinforced concrete, the design of the building was inspired by Japanese pagoda architecture which, it was thought, would be in keeping with the garden scenery of the park. The oriental flavor was forwarded by an arcaded pavilion trimmed with red tile roofs, characteristically upturned at the corners. Harry E. Boyle, an architect and a local pioneer in reinforced concrete construction, is credited with the design and the C. F. Kleiderer & Son company of Henderson, Kentucky, carried out the work.

The pavilion is situated in the narrow north end of Sunset Park, a strip of high river-bank land that extends southward from Dress Plaza (the city's historic wharf area) for nearly three-tenths of a mile. On the west and below the park is the Ohio River; on the east is the four-lane Riverside Drive, part of which forms the western boundary of the Riverside Historic District (National Register 1978). Endowed with its atmospheric name in 1873, the rude river-bank land evolved by the turn of the century into a popular, shaded pleasure spot, garnished with flower beds and laced with curving stone walks. When it was erected in 1912, the pavilion became the centerpiece of this setting, offering shelter and amenities for park visitors, and serving as a venue for band concerts. After Ohio River flood waters inundated Evansville in 1937, the park's land gave way first to necessity with the construction in the early-1940s of the levee and a pumping station, and then, in 1959, to a new use with the completion of a much-needed modern museum. Use of the pavilion decreased proportionately with the loss of the surrounding park context. In 1962, the building was enclosed with infill walls and doors in order to create additional museum work shop and storage space. For a time after installation of the outdoor train exhibit along its east side in 1967, a section of the pavilion housed an old-fashioned train station exhibit. Since 1988 and the completion of a new museum wing with adequate storage space, the park structure has been used primarily for the storage of grounds equipment.

Although enclosed with temporary walls, the original design of the pavilion remains virtually undisturbed. It was built as an open-air facility, featuring

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five wide arches along its eighty-eight-foot length and three across its fifty-foot width. All structural members (beams, columns, floor, roofs, and walls) are of reinforced concrete cast in place. The first level of roof slopes that encircle the building are of concrete overlaid with red barrel tile. The roofs terminate in a deep overhang underscored with exposed rafter ends and have upturned corners. The north end of the building is the focal point of the plan. Here, highly visible from Dress Plaza (in the early years, the city wharf) and the river, a tower effect rises above the roof deck of the structure. Support columns are of concrete, but the tile roof, also with the characteristic upswept corners, is based upon a timber framework. Rising from the apex of its low pyramidal form is the 1912 flagpole. (More than any other design element of the pavilion, it is the style and position of this roof which imparts to the building its "Japanesque" connotation, and is responsible for the more recent appellation of "The Pagoda.") The spatial plan of the structure is a simple one which consists of three levels: a full ("English") basement, sectioned off by walls into bathrooms and a central storage space; the covered pavilion; and, above, a roof-top observation deck. The floor of the pavilion is elevated some three feet above the ground and reached by a set of broad steps on each side. In the north end is a divided-flight stairway, joined midway by a common landing, that provides access to the deck. (The stairwell was covered over at the top in 1962 by a temporary wooden cover with a hatch opening.) Stairway and landing railings are of wood and may be original. The deck is open space except for the north end that is sheltered by the tower roof. Sections of concrete balustrades and connecting decorative metal rails form a continuous border around the deck. Now concealed by a coat of paint are ornamental accents formed by inlaid brick. A repeating diamond pattern enhances the area above the north entrance arcade and stylized pendants add a simple architectural flourish to the tops of perimeter columns. (Originally, concrete surfaces other than the floors were finished with a coat of cement painted a creamy white.)

During the last half century, maintenance of the shelter house has been negligible. Despite this, it is in stable condition, but there is superficial concrete deterioration from water penetration and one of the roof slopes (the west slope) was repaired by removing the tile and installing a covering of roll roofing. Future plans of the Evansville Museum call for relocating the train exhibit closer to and paralleling Riverside Drive, thus opening up the ground in front of the pavilion for landscaping. In conjunction with this project, the structure is to be restored.

The following is a list of photographs, accompanied by date and directional data, as well as by other pertinent information. All contemporary views were taken in March 1991 by Joan C. Marchand. Early-1900s views of Sunset Park and the shelter house were reproduced from post cards. The final repository for the negatives will be The Willard Library, Evansville, Indiana. Numbers in parenthesis correlate with the photographic print numbering system and are keyed onto the Photographic Key Map.

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(1)

A post card view, facing southeast, showing the Sunset Park Pavilion in 1913. (The card's cancellation date was "August 4, 1913.") The brick diamond pattern above the central arcade and the pendant motif at the tops of perimeter columns can be plainly seen, as can the wood railings of the arcades and the stairway. The flagpole still rises from the pinnacle of the tower roof, but it is in need of repair. It is this north elevation with its two tiers of roofs, characteristically upturned at the corners, which has in recent decades prompted local residents to refer to the building as "The Pagoda."

(2)

Another post card view of the park building taken sometime in the nineteen-teens. The view shows the north and west elevations. In the foreground can be seen the rock curbing of the road constructed along the river bank which provided access to the small-boat dock just below the pavilion.

(3)

View, facing southwest, of the park in about 1908.

The following photographs were taken in March 1991.

(4)

View, facing south, showing the river on the right in the photograph and part of the Museum to the left. The picture was taken from the south end of the pavilion's observation deck.

(5)

View, facing northwest, showing the contemporary context of the shelter house as seen from Riverside Drive. The land on which the Museum and the pavilion are situated was created in the first decade of this century.

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(6)

View taken from the observation deck, facing southeast. In the foreground can be seen the ornamental metal railings which replaced in 1922 the original wood railings. Riverside Drive across from the park is lined with imposing residences of the National Register Riverside Historic District.

(7)

View taken from the levee, facing north. The levee was constructed in the early 1940s after the 1937 Ohio River flood. The earthwork markedly reduced visibility of the river from the park. In the background, to the far left in the photograph, can be seen the concrete-sloped Dress Plaza, which took the place in 1936 of the old cobble-stoned city wharf. To the north of the pavilion, and not visible in this photograph, is the 1942 red brick pumping station that was part of the levee project.

(8)

View, facing southeast, showing the spatial relationship between the pavilion and the Museum. The chain link fence is to keep out trespassers when the Museum is closed. In the left hand corner of the photograph can be seen a covered-over exterior stairway which led to one of the bathrooms in the basement. Access to the north part of the basement is via an interior stairway in the northeast corner of the pavilion.

(9)

View, facing northwest, showing the outdoor train exhibit which was installed in 1967 just to the east of the pavilion. A work car, the caboose, and the dining car are in view.

(10)

View, facing north, of the south elevation of the pavilion. The stone monument to the right in the photograph is dedicated to steamboat captain Henry Dexter.

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(11)

View, facing northeast, of the west side of the building. The west slope of the roof has been covered with roll roofing. In the far left of the photograph can be seen the tops of the Four Freedoms Monument columns, erected in 1979 as a community project and using the four Ionic columns from the 1908 C & E I passenger station to represent a patriotic theme.

(12)

View, facing southeast, of the north elevation of the pavilion. The windows of the basement can be seen. In 1937, flood waters invaded the basement through the window openings.

(13)

View showing the work car and caboose of the train exhibit and their juxtaposition with the pavilion.

(14)

Close-up of the east side of the pavilion. The infill walls are constructed of redwood boards attached to studs.

(15)

View, facing southeast, of the interior of the shelter house, showing the engineering and assembly of the roof.

(16)

View of the divided stairway at the north end of the building. The railing may be the original one.

(17)

View, facing southeast, taken from the south end of the observation deck. The inside surfaces of the concrete railings have been 'repaired' with fiberglass mesh, coated with a sealant. The tiled deck has been covered over the years with several layers of built-up roofing in order to inhibit water penetration into the interior of the building.

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(18)

View, facing north, showing the north, roofed-over end of the deck. The timber framing and tiles of this roof are surprisingly in good condition. Underneath the roof can be seen the cover over the stairwell.

(19)

View, facing northeast, taken from the (rear) terrace of the Museum and showing the northeast corner of the park. Future plans call for re-positioning the train close to Riverside Drive, removing the fence, and landscaping the area between "The Pagoda" and the train.

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The significance of Evansville's Sunset Park Pavilion resides in the area of architecture. Erected in 1912 as a complementary centerpiece for the landscaped river-front park, the design of the pavilion at the time represented a unique union of modern reinforced concrete construction with the exotic Japanese Buddhist pagoda architecture. Its date also places it as one of the earliest local demonstrations of twentieth-century concrete building technology. The architect was Harry E. Boyle, who gave his adopted city not only its first durable public park architecture, but its most aesthetic. Although deprived many years ago of its cultivated setting and scenic river backdrop, the value of the Sunset Park Pavilion as a one-of-a-kind Evansville architectural work remains undiminished.

Evansville in the early years of this century was taking seriously the Progressive Era wisdom that a city is judged by its appearance, and with reformation spirit community leaders were working in earnest to fashion Evansville's physical environment into a "City Beautiful." Upgrading existing municipal parks and creating new ones was seen as one way to help accomplish the transformation. As the 'front entrance' to the river-based town and a popular recreational spot for its citizens, Sunset Park was a logical place to start. In the spring of 1911, architects were invited to submit plans and bids for the design of a shelter house for Sunset Park. By fall, the commission had been awarded to Harry E. Boyle, head of the Evansville office of the Indianapolis-based Brubaker, Stern & Boyle firm for his "Japanesque" rendition of a pavilion. Assurances were given by him that "it would harmonize with the surroundings and be picturesque, as well as bright and cheerful, with enough color in the roof to give life to the site." The facility, as it turned out, was ornamental in aspect, but it was also purposeful. Incorporated into the three-level, oblong plan were basement lavatories and storage space, a sheltered ground floor, spacious enough for inserting a "refreshment parlor," and a roof-top observation deck that could also be used as a bandstand. The building was completed by November of 1912 on recent fill ground and was angled slightly so that its primary (north) elevation with its two tiers of roofs a la pagoda fashion would capture the attention of riverboat travelers and people disembarking--or embarking--at the wharf. The structure cost \$15,000, only several thousand dollars less than

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expenditures for park maintenance during the previous three years, and represented the largest single outlay of money for public park improvement up to that time. For the period--and since--the Sunset Park 'pagoda' was the crowning jewel of local park architecture. There was--and is--no comparison between it and the utilitarian bandstands and pavilions erected five years later in the landscaped Garvin Park (National Register 1980) and the wooded, rustic Mesker Park. Constructed with brick columns supporting low-profile hipped or pyramidal roofs and with concrete floors, these simplistic structures were also the work of Boyle and are still used by the general public. With regard to other extant Evansville architecture designed with an exotic motif, there is only the domed, Moorish Alhambra Theatorium (1913; National Register 1979), which was the handiwork of Frank J. Schlotter.

In hand with the novelty architecture of the pavilion is the significance of its construction. It was a practical building. The use of reinforced concrete cast in place made it virtually fire-proof and maintenance free, unlike the popular timbered, log, or creosoted board park architecture of the era. Providing the building with a 'one-piece' frame of concrete may also have been a means to counteract the possible settling action and movement of the newly created ground on which it was built. By 1911, when Boyle was preparing the plans for the shelter house, concrete in poured or block form had been in use locally only since about 1906. The first use of reinforced concrete is believed to have been in the construction of the one-story Farmer's & Citizen's Bank of Howell in 1906. The plans were by Harris & Shopbell. This initial use was followed a year later (1907) by the five-story Parsons & Scoville grocery warehouse (National Register 1982) in which columns, beams, and floors were of concrete reinforced with steel. The same system went into the construction in 1908 of the Furniture Exchange Building (Court Building; National Register 1982). The plans for both brick-walled buildings were the product of Harris & Shopbell. What is singular about the pavilion in comparison to these buildings, however, is its 'open display' of concrete, unconcealed by brick or some other 'refined' material. Here, the usually unseen concrete 'skeleton' is totally visible, and provides ornamentality to the design as much as it serves as structural framework. It is also a sturdy showcase for carrying the heavy tile roofs and supporting a large number of people at any one time who used the observation deck. Of particular interest is the articulation of the roofs as seen from the interior of the ground floor. The straightforwardness of the design of the building offers an unusual study of early twentieth-century reinforced concrete assembly.

It was the Furniture Exchange Building that brought Harry E. Boyle (1881-1947) to Evansville. Although progressive for the period, Harris & Shopbell did not have a concrete specialist on staff. When planning for the building in the spring of 1908, Boyle was hired to superintend its construction. A native of Greensburg, Indiana, Boyle had graduated in 1902 from the (Ohio) Mechanics Institute in Cincinnati, where part of his course work dealt with reinforced concrete engineering. By 1908, he was

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associated with the Indianapolis firm of Henry C. Brubaker, and it was through this employment and his professional experience that led to the Evansville job. There are indications that Boyle's affiliation with Harris & Shoppell may have been only temporary, until the completion of the exchange building. However, after it was finished in early 1909, he continued on with the company for a year. In the fall of 1910, he rejoined his former Indianapolis associate and opened an Evansville office for the newly-created partnership of Brubaker, Stern & Boyle. He was in complete charge of the operation. The work that he and his staff produced established a comfortable reputation, so that in 1913 Boyle firmly put down roots in Evansville and opened his own office: Harry E. Boyle & Company. Within a decade, he had wielded his firm into one of the region's leading architectural offices, recognized particularly in the area of school design. In 1927 alone, Boyle and his staff had commissions for twelve schools, including high schools in Paoli, Troy, Oakland City, and Hanover, Indiana, and for half a dozen primary and secondary schools in Kentucky. Like Harris & Shoppell (and its successor, Clifford Shoppell & Company), Boyle's office 'graduated' a number of skilled architects, such as Alfred E. Neucks, who may have been the draftsman for the Sunset Park Pavilion. Boyle's Evansville career spanned four decades and was ended only by his death at age sixty-six in 1947.

Complementing the pavilion's design work was the solid construction knowledge and expertise that went into it. Responsible for this was a Henderson, Kentucky, contracting firm headed by Charles Frederick Kleiderer (born circa 1859; died in 1927) and bearing his name. Information on Kleiderer's building activities is scant. However, sometime around 1904 he gave up operating the Hotel Henderson and went into the concrete construction business. Besides the pavilion, the only other work that the company is known to have carried out were three concrete-block bungalows and Kleiderer's own two-story residence (also of concrete block) that were put up prior to 1908 on Henderson's North Elm Street. All are present today and all are in an excellent state of preservation. The poured-in-place park shelter house, though, called for more than simple masonry skills. It required engineering expertise for constructing the elaborate formwork and shoring, mixing the concrete, inserting the steel rebars correctly, and locating the joints between structural elements properly. The pavilion is a testament not only to the durability of concrete, but also to Kleiderer's craftsmanship. In 1914 or 1915, he turned his attention to agrarian pursuits and became well known as an orchardist.

The architectural and engineering merits of the Sunset Park Pavilion are tangible and comprise its primary significance. However, it also possesses value as a cultural resource. For a quarter of a century, as the focal point of Sunset Park the structure was integral to the enjoyment that townspeople sought when visiting

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the landscaped grounds. The pavilion offered respite from the hot summer sun, refreshment, and amenities, and hosted band concerts. From benches arranged on the ground floor and on the observation deck, people could relax and watch the river world in motion and catch an occasional magnificent sunset. In the aftermath of "The Great Flood" of 1937, communities along the Ohio turned their backs on it and erected flood walls and levees to protect themselves against future river rampages. In the process, the visual relationship that had previously been enjoyed was largely lost. Evansville was no exception. With the completion in recent decades of a modern lock-and-dam system that promises a tight control over the river, a new generation, removed from the catastrophe by five decades, is seeking to re-establish the historical ties with the river, and up and down the Ohio's length, flood walls have been removed or modified and sections of levee opened up. In Evansville during the early-1980s, when a downtown revitalization project was in the planning stages, there was a general concensus that the pedestrian view of the river be restored. In response to this, ground the length of six blocks behind the elevated Riverside Drive was filled in and a landscaped esplanade created out of the old highway. The location has become a "destination place" for strollers, joggers and just plain river watchers. With the river in the background it has also become a stage for holding community events. In this context, interest in restoring the Sunset Park "Pagoda" and placing it back into respectable service has swelled. The future of the seventy-nine-year-old architectural and cultural artifact is bright.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

ATLASES & HISTORIES

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Zutt, Elizabeth. Evansville: 20 February 1991

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(continued)

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Section number 9 Page 13 Sunset Park Pavilion, Vanderburgh County, IN

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Building New (continued)

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Henderson County, Kentucky. Deed Records.

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Part of the Southeast quarter of Section 30, Township 6 South, Range 10 West, lying in the City of Evansville, County of Vanderburgh, State of Indiana, and more particularly described as follows:

Commencing at the northwest corner of Lot 5 of the Upper Enlargement to the City of Evansville, which is located at the intersection of Southeast Riverside Drive and Cherry Street;

Thence south 80 degrees west for a distance of 309.5 feet to a point 4.5 feet from the southeast corner of the Sunset Park Pavilion, the true point of beginning;

Thence north 31 degrees 45 minutes west for a distance of 97 feet;

Thence south 58 degrees 15 minutes west for a distance of 59 feet;

Thence south 31 degrees 45 minutes east for a distance of 97 feet;

Thence north 58 degrees 15 minutes east for a distance of 59 feet.

SUNSET PARK
PAVILION
EVANSVILLE
(VANDERBURGH
CO.), IN
UTM =
499 590 4201970



