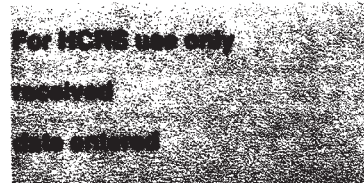


FINAL

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Garvin Park

and/or common

2. Location

street & number North Main and Morgan Avenue ___ not for publication

city, town Evansville ___ vicinity of congressional district

state Indiana code 18 county Vanderburgh code 163

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	* public	* occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
___ building(s)	___ private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	* park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
* site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	___ in process	* yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name City of Evansville

street & number 302 City-County Building

city, town Evansville ___ vicinity of state Indiana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Vanderburgh County Recorder

street & number City-County Building

city, town Evansville state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title National Register has this property been determined eligible? yes ___ no

date 29 March 1979 * federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Department of the Interior

city, town Washington, DC 20240 state

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

*unaltered
 altered

Check one

* original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Garvin Park marked the genesis of Evansville's park and recreation system. Planned and laid out in 1915, the park was a naturalistic landscape associated with the period's picturesque impulse. The ninety acres contained a variety of indigenous trees and shrubs arrayed along low hills and outlining grassy meadows. (See Photo 1.) Located hard on the edge of Pigeon Creek, the park capitalized on former tributary ravines and washes to create curving drives, umbrageous groves, vistas, and a pond, 'Evansmere,' the park's centralizing element.

For decades before the city's acquisition of the land, Garvin Park served the northside as a privately owned pleasure grounds. Known then as Garvin's Grove, the tract was "budding with possibilities as a recreation and fresh air spot, but littered with decaying timber and in large part not only uninviting to picnickers but inaccessible as well."

The challenge was met by city officials and their architects, American Park Builders. Fill for the gullies which traversed the grounds came from winding roads graded along the ridges of several hills. A concrete reinforced dam was built along the flood-prone, polluted creek. A five acre artificial lake, stocked by the federal government, was created within the largest ravine. (See Photo 2.)

The nature of the park's surroundings also determined the selection of plantings and the placement of designed features. Garvin's Grove was situated at the terminus of Main Street, several miles from the center of town and unincorporated until 1915. The principal entrance had been laid out as a five hundred foot extension of Main Street, planted with a double row of trees and terminated with a fountain. (See Photo 3.) The entrance road was then divided into two separate drives, looping the park and crossing the new lake dam on the west side of the park. A ten foot grassy sward was cut to flank the roads.

Industry bordered the park on all sides, and a belt line railroad separated the park from the town to the south. (See Photo 4.) News reports described the designers' approach to the problem:

The giant oaks on the west border of the park will serve as a complete screen to the factory district to the west of the park and the trees along the north and east borders will have the same effect.

The pleasure seeker in the park will at all times be confronted with only natural scenes as the artificialities of the city will be screened from view on all sides.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> * community planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> * landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> * 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> * politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1915 **Builder/Architect** Myron H. West

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Evansville's Garvin Park was a significant resource for both political and architectural reasons. The city joined the park and boulevard movement well after Olmsted's demise, but Garvin Park and its attendant pleasure drives nevertheless fell firmly within the circle of his influence. Yet even more important was the park's association with the city's energetic Progressive mayor, Benjamin Bossee.

Bossee's park plan for the city began with Garvin Park and furnished free recreation and breathing-space for working class northsiders, but eventually embraced all sections of the metropolitan area. In his annual report for 1915, Bossee had praise for his park board and declared the following: the board

will leave a record in park extension and improvements to be envied and will leave to incoming administrations a comprehensive plan, which will assure Evansville the kind of park system that she is entitled to have.

As much as Bossee believed, however, in the good that park space could provide for the poor or laboring classes, the mayor's reasons for pushing the work forward were not altogether altruistic. Bossee realized that the city was lagging in park improvements and that adding park acreage would be increasingly expensive as the city deferred action. Bossee correctly perceived the trend in other cities where park land purchased cheaply on the outskirts of developed areas would usher in a series of private improvements such as fashionable houses, churches, shops and the like. The benefit to the city was not only in caring for those living and working in crowded conditions, but also in attracting investments and widening its tax base. Bossee felt so strongly, in fact, about the success and future of Garvin Park and the nearby stadium named for him, that he contributed over \$10,000 of his own money to the total park cost of \$100,000.

The role of American Park Builders in this Progressive enterprise is unfortunately sketchy. The Chicago firm was apparently nationwide in scope. It produced designs for parks in Chicago, St. Louis, and Cleveland in addition to Garvin Park.

The architect for the Evansville project was Myron Howard West (b. 1880). West appeared before the park board in February 1915 to discuss his plans for Garvin's Grove. "The designs were prepared with a view of retaining all the natural beauty of the park," reported the Evansville Courier. West, an accomplished designer and administrator, gave substance to Bossee's forward-looking spirit.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 87

Quadrangle name Evansville North

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	16	4	5	10	7	17	10	4	12	0	15	6	10	10
Zone		Easting						Northing						

B

1	16	4	5	10	7	15	15	4	12	0	14	8	17	10
Zone		Easting						Northing						

C

1	6	4	5	0	1	4	0	4	2	0	4	8	9	0

D

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

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached continuation sheet.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joan Marchand and Douglas Stern

organization Department of Metropolitan Development date 4 May 1979

street & number 308 City-County Building telephone (812) 426-5487

city or town Evansville state Indiana

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Douglas Stern*

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 4-21-80

For HCRS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

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The immediate environment of the park changed slightly in the 1920's however, as modest but neat bungalows were constructed with a park view. (See Photo 5.)

Few original built features--bridges, walks and the like--have survived. Rustic timber foot bridges ("untouched by saw or plane") crossed the narrower parts of the pond and have been replaced with bridges of the concrete and stone variety. (See Photo 6.) A greenhouse, shelter, and wading pond have also been demolished or replaced. (See Photo 7.) A WPA-era bandstand supplanted the one which first occupied the music grove near the entrance. (See Photo 8.)

Though some encroachment has occurred and only a few architectural features have survived intact, the park clearly has maintained the spirit and detail of its early-twentieth century origins. Garvin Park remains an important and vivid historic landscape. (See Photo 9.)

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Bibliography:

Newspapers:

"Benjamin Bosse." Evansville Courier, 2 January 1916

"Big Things Done by the Mayor for Moral Betterment of the City." Evansville Courier, 4 November 1917.

"Gift to Evansville." Evansville Courier, 8 June 1915

"Mayor Gives \$6,000 to Park." Evansville Courier, 8 June 1915

"Movable Band Stand for Garvin Park." Evansville Courier, 28 April 1916.

"Musical Retreat of Garvin." Evansville Courier, (?) March 1915.

"New Water Slide in the Southwest Part of Garvin Park Gift of Mayor Bosse." Evansville Courier, 7 July 1916

"Park Board Acts to Obtain Tract Close to Garvin." Evansville Courier, 7 September 1951.

"\$30,000 to be Spent to Beautify Garvin." Evansville Courier, 3 February 1915.

"To Build Tennis Courts at Park." Evansville Courier, 15 April 1921.

"To Finish Garvin Park and Buy New Land on West Side Proposed." Evansville Courier, 2 January 1916.

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Government Documents:

City Plan Commission (Harland Bartholomew and Associates). A System of Recreation Facilities: Evansville, Indiana. 1927.

Evansville, Indiana. Annual Reports, 1913-1918.

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Evansville: Tillman & Fuller Publishing Company, 1899; reprinted,
Evansville: Unigraphic, Inc., and Friends of Willard Library, 1975.

Gilbert, Frank. History of the City of Evansville and Vanderburgh County.
2 vols. Chicago: The Pioneer Publishing Company, 1910.

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Commencing at a point on the north line of Morgan Avenue 9 feet east of the east line of North Main Street; thence from said place of beginning in a westerly direction along upon the north line of Morgan Avenue to a point where said line intersects with the east property line of Whirlpool Plant #1; thence in a northerly direction along upon the east property line of Whirlpool Plant #1 to a point where said line intersects with the north property line of said plant; thence in a northwesterly direction along upon the north property line of said plant to its northern most point; thence in a northerly direction along upon a line to a point where said line intersects with the west line of an unnamed park road; thence in a northeasterly direction along upon the west line of said unnamed park road to a point where said line intersects with the east line of Herndon Drive; thence in a southerly direction along upon the east line of Herndon Drive and continuing in an easterly direction along upon the north line of Herndon Drive to a point where said line intersects with the east line of North Heidelberg Avenue; thence in a southerly direction along upon the east line of North Heidelberg Avenue to a point where said line intersects with the south line of Maxwell Avenue; thence in a northwesterly direction along upon the south line of Maxwell Avenue and continuing along upon the south line of Maxwell Avenue extended to a point 9 feet east of the east line of North Main Street; thence in a southerly direction to the place of beginning.

THIS CUTS OUT
BOSSE FIELD.
PCD 8-94