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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 Sunken Gardens

other names/site number 069-049-22540 (1981 survey)

069-049-28127 (1994 survey)

2. Location

street & number West Park Drive

N/A not for publication

city or town Huntington

vicinity

state Indiana

code IN

county Huntington

code 069

zip code: 46750

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

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

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

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:	
0	0	buildings:
1	0	sites:
0	1	structures:
0	0	objects:
1	1	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:

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE: Park

Current Functions:

(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE: Park

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials:

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other STONE

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.)

- 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1923-1947

Significant Dates

1923

1929

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Chicago Landscape Co.

Koch, Martin

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Huntington Library, Indiana Room

Sunken Gardens
Name of Property

Huntington IN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approx. 1.5 AC

UTM References:

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1:

1	6	6	2	5	8	8	0	4	5	2	6	1	7	0
Zone		Easting					Northing							

2:

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 Adrian Scott Fine, Field Coordinator

organization Huntington Historic Review Board date 1-23-97

street & number County Courthouse, Room 209 telephone: 219-358-4836

city or town Huntington state IN zip code 46750

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 Huntington

street & number County Courthouse, Room 208 telephone 219-358-4836

city or town Huntington state IN zip code 46750

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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Sunken Gardens
Huntington County, Indiana

Narrative Description

The Sunken Gardens consists of a one and one-half acre site located west of downtown Huntington (Photos 1-3). As part of a large recreational park system including Memorial Park to the west and Shakespeare Garden to the east, the Gardens were created from an abandoned limestone quarry north of West Park Drive (Business U.S. 24). Primary features of the Gardens include limestone, outcropped walls on all sides; three entrances; a horse-shoe-shaped pool; limestone foot bridges; two levels; and, an automobile-related fieldstone bridge at West Park Drive (Photos 4-6). The area surrounding the Gardens is very much as it was when they were originally created. As with most historic designed landscapes, the Sunken Gardens have suffered from a period of deterioration and a loss of original plant material. Regardless, the Sunken Gardens do retain a high level of historical integrity. Nearly all of the primary structural features are intact and convey the sense of the original design, as completed in 1929. Changes to the Gardens, primarily new elements added in the 1980s, are insignificant and have little impact to the character of the Gardens. The Sunken Gardens nomination includes the entire original boundaries.

In 1923, plans for the Sunken Gardens were prepared by the Chicago Landscape Company and its architects Blarry and Rary. Significant elements featured in the plans included a new bridge at West Park Drive with a series of stone pillars and light standards; a Japanese pergola structure with grouped columns; two stone, double-arched foot bridges; and an irregular, horseshoe-shaped pool. The design was organized on a cross axis with a central pathway emerging from a tunnel located underneath the bridge (West Park Drive) and another pathway connecting both foot bridges. Two separate levels were proposed. Thicker, more mature vegetation was depicted on the lower level surrounding the pool, and a relatively open space was shown for the upper level at the east side. Many of the features of the original design were actually implemented. Based on a period postcard depicting the Gardens in the 1920s (Exhibit 1), only the Japanese pergola structure and observation areas along the northern edge of the site were not constructed.

The Sunken Gardens, as completed and dedicated in 1929, included a large central land area or peninsula jutting out into the pool of water. This land area included a central pathway leading to the water and connected to a perpendicular pathway that linked to both foot bridges. At the axis of both pathways was a stone pillar with a round globe, light standard at the top. The division of the paths created four separate landscaped areas. Each area featured mature landscaping that looked almost tropical in appearance at some locations. Wood fencing with vertical members located approximately every six feet surrounded each landscape area. Today, this area still features a cross axial division

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Sunken Gardens
Huntington County, Indiana

of pathways. At the terminus of the central pathway is now a five-sided gazebo constructed of wood. This structure was erected in the Gardens in the mid-1980s. An open lawn has replaced the four richly landscaped areas. Four raised beds are located in the area, adjacent to the pool, and include ornamental trees. Two light standards, also installed in the mid-1980s, are located at the entrance to each bridge (Photos 7, 8).

Two rustic, foot bridges cross the pool at the narrowest point and are situated in an east-west direction (Photo 9). Each bridge is detailed with an arched wall of irregular cut limestones arranged in a jagged, soldier course capping. Both bridges have three to four steps located at each end and have two segmental arched openings. Although the two bridges appear to be identical in design, each features different characteristics. The bridge at the west end of the site has straight side walls and a blind arch detail located between the two openings (Photos 10, 11). The east bridge does not feature the blind arch and has curved side walls (Photos 12). Both bridges originally had single end pillars. Although this element no longer remains, a pillar of approximately four feet in height was located on the northeast corner of the west bridge and the southeast corner of the east bridge. In period photographs, it appears that either a round, stone finial or light standard was located on top of each pillar.

Surrounding the land peninsula is one of the first features constructed at the Gardens, an irregular, horseshoe-shaped pool of water. With a low retaining wall on all sides, the pool is the most prominent element of the Sunken Gardens. The original retaining wall was constructed with both stones and concrete. Due to deterioration and collapse, a new retaining wall was built using only concrete in 1967. At different points in its history, the pool was stocked with fish. In 1924, the year that the two bridges were constructed, at least one fountain was installed. A period photograph shows a raised fountain constructed of stones and located in the southeast portion of the pool. Today, four operable fountains are located within the pool.

At the east side of the Gardens is an upper level that overlooks the pool. Approximately six to eight feet higher in elevation, this area is connected by a curved fieldstone staircase (Photos 13, 14). As an original feature, the staircase includes fieldstone side walls and steps of concrete and brick. The handrail is constructed of form-fitted pipe. A portion of a well house structure is located along the edge of the upper level. According to the 1923 plans, a Japanese pergola structure was proposed to be constructed at this location. In 1926, an artesian well was reported to be under construction which is presumed to be referring to the present structure. Features of the well house include low, fieldstone walls with openings on several facades. A 1931 photograph shows the well house with a

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gambrel shaped roof structure located on top of the fieldstone walls. By January of 1983, the roof structure had been removed and a wood seating area placed on top of the well house.

Overall, the upper level appears to have always been designed as an open space with little mature vegetation (Photo 15). A 1931 photograph identifies a formal design scheme including intersecting, curved pathways, low plantings, and a circular floral element as the focal point. Trees appear to have been planted along the eastern edge of the Gardens. Today this area remains an open space with a central lawn and along the edge, ornamental trees and a raised planting area trimmed out in limestones. A picnic table structure is located in this area which features a gable-shaped roof located above.

At the northeast and southeast corners of the upper level are two winding staircases, providing the only access to the Gardens other than the tunnel. A light standard erected in the park in the 1980s is located at the base of each staircase. The northeast staircase is original and features fieldstone side walls with concrete steps (Photos 16, 17). Form-fitting pipe is used as a handrail. Near to the top of the staircase is a landing, a curved fieldstone wall, and several pillars. Each pillar had round globed, light standards located at the top originally. The southeast staircase was completely rebuilt in the 1980s with a wood structure. However because the grade at this location was not as steep, the original southeast staircase was not as elaborate in scale or design as the northeast staircase.

One of the most outstanding features of the Sunken Gardens is the bridge at West Park Drive (Photos 18-20). Constructed of fieldstones and built as specified in the original design, the bridge includes two automobile lanes separated by a low wall and four pillars on each side. Located at each end of the bridge are two pillars of approximately ten feet in height. Characteristics of the pillars are concrete caps and round globed, light standards located at the top. Each of these pillars has downward sloping curved walls to one side. Located at the center of the bridge at each side and directly over the tunnel are two, grouped pillars of approximately five feet in height. Both feature the same characteristics of the larger pillars. The wall separating the two pillars on each side is curved. Buffered from the traffic and located on each side of the wall is a sidewalk. A wood railing, resembling a truss construction, was originally located along the sidewalk facing the Gardens and directly over the tunnel entrance. Currently the bridge is in a deteriorating condition with some of the side walls braced for support.

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A remaining element of the Sunken Gardens includes a chain-link fence that is located around the entire perimeter of the site. Wood fencing with vertical members located approximately every six feet surrounded the entire site originally. One additional feature is a sign announcing the Gardens which was erected along West Park Drive in the 1980s. The sign is constructed of wood and limestone.

Presently, only minor new elements, deterioration and vandalism have resulted in alterations to the overall site. The original design and layout are evident with nearly all of the primary structural features still in place. With the re-introduction of plant material, matching the original varieties and density levels, the Gardens could easily be recreated as originally designed and would appear much as they did when dedicated in 1929. The Sunken Gardens do retain the level of integrity necessary to convey its historic and landscape architectural significance.

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**Sunken Gardens
Huntington County, Indiana**

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Statement of Significance

The Sunken Gardens located along West Park Drive, Huntington, Indiana, are significant as a historic design landscape. The design incorporates the picturesque theory creating a natural and informal environment. The Gardens represent the vision of community leaders and civic organizations to conceive, plan, and fund the reuse of an abandoned quarry and successfully promote it as a tourist attraction. With the increase in automobile ownership and the construction of the modern-day highway network, the Gardens also represent an early use of landscape architecture which was designed to attract the attention of the passing motorist. Finally, the Gardens portray the work of a landscape professional, the Chicago Landscape Company and its architects Blarry and Rary. Since its construction as a public landscape between 1923 and 1929, the Sunken Gardens have served as a unique landmark of Huntington and Huntington County. With only minimal changes occurring since it was dedicated in 1929, the Gardens do retain the level of integrity necessary to portray the sense and feeling of the original design. The Sunken Gardens were identified and rated Outstanding in the 1994 Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory of the City of Huntington (28127).

Historical Background and Significance

Since its incorporation as a town in 1848 and as a city in 1873, Huntington's land area and population has expanded tremendously with three major developments: the Wabash and Erie Canal in the 1840s, the arrival of the Wabash Railroad in 1856, and the establishment of the Chicago and Atlantic Railroad (Erie) in 1882. Because of its many quarries and kilns that produced lime, Huntington was commonly referred to as "Lime City." The first known kiln was built in 1843-1844 by Michael Houseman. Thirty-one kilns were reported to be in operation, either full time or on occasion, by 1885. Area limestone was burned in the kilns to produce the necessary hydrated lime ingredient for mortar or crushed into gravel for building railroad beds and later highway construction projects. Lime was shipped to Fort Wayne and other points along the canal and later on the Wabash Railroad. Typically the local limestone was not used as a primary building material or, when used, was a structural element not visible on the exterior; a higher grade of limestone was imported, usually from southern Indiana.

Huntington County was one of the largest lime producing areas in the state by the early 1900s. The Ohio and Western Lime Company and the Erie Stone Company were two of the largest producers in the area. In the 1850s, a number of quarries and kilns stretched west of Huntington along Maple Grove Road (now known as West Park Drive, Business

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U. S. 24) up to Mt. Hope Cemetery. One of the earliest quarries in this area was operated by the Keefer and Bailey Lime, Brick, Tile and Cement Company. At some time between 1914 and 1920, the company chose to abandon the quarry and its rock crushing machinery. Located along the main east-west thoroughfare into Huntington and just outside of the city limits, the quarry was considered by many residents and visitors as a community eyesore.

Around this same time in the summer of 1919, J. M. Triggs of the Huntington Commercial Club started promoting the need for a community park. He stated Huntington was experiencing industrial and commercial progress. However, Triggs was concerned that nothing was being provided for the needs of the people, specifically in terms of recreation and natural beauty. The Commercial Club asked the city council to provide parks for the people of Huntington and J. W. Caswell was named head of a committee to raise \$5,000 towards a program for parks and beautification. Class A, B, and C memberships were established for area businesses to contribute to the fund in the corresponding amounts of 50, 25, and 15 cents per employee on an annual basis. This proposal was presented to the city council who, reportedly, reluctantly agreed to take it under consideration. After an initial proposal to locate a park at the site of the Central School was rejected, the city council decided to purchase Cold Spring Grove, a 43 acre area located west of the city and adjacent to the Keefer and Bailey quarry. Already used for picnicking and Fourth of July celebrations, a portion of Cold Spring Grove was purchased for \$16,067 in 1920 and renamed Cold Spring Park. On May 30, 1922, the park was re-dedicated as Memorial Park to honor World War I soldier and sailor casualties of Huntington County.

Memorial Park provided the necessary context for the reuse of the Keefer and Bailey quarry. To reach Memorial Park, a person had to pass by the quarry which, by 1920, was partially filled with water. By this time the quarry was also best known as the final destination of a prize driving steed (type of horse), owned by George Barton and O. B. Hurlburt, which ran away with an empty rig from downtown to the quarry, leaped in and drowned.

In 1922, E. M. Wasmuth, a Huntington resident and later a state Republican chairman, vacationed in San Antonio, Texas. One of the sites Wasmuth visited was a sunken garden, a designed landscape which he proposed upon his return to duplicate in Huntington at the site of the quarry. At a cost of \$4,500, the American Legion, Rotary,

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Kiwanis, and Exchange clubs provided individuals who endorsed notes for the purchase of the quarry and lots on the south side of West Park Drive. By 1923, an Inter-Club Park Committee was formed including the above-mentioned clubs with the addition of the Huntington Community Club. One of the first projects of the Committee was to hire the Chicago Landscaping Company and its architects Blarry and Rary to prepare the design for the Sunken Gardens. The purpose of the Committee was to raise the necessary funds to complete the project, estimated at \$11,000.

In the June 14, 1923 issue of the Huntington Herald Press, the Inter-Club Park Committee purchased a full-page advertisement with a heading stating, "Help Beautify Huntington's Silent Tribute." Featuring a birds-eye view rendering depicting the proposed transformation of the quarry, the advertisement stated in part:

A sunken garden with beautiful foliage, rough stone walls, rustic limestone bridges, shallow pools of water, Japanese pergola, attractive winding walks and stairs will be made from the unsightly quarry hole now flanked by dilapidated buildings. These improvements are permanent, practical and of the utmost beauty. A project every citizen will enjoy and will look to with pride.

The proposed project also was promoted as an entrance and "beautiful addition to Memorial Park." At the time of the advertisement, the Committee had already raised \$3,000 dollars with \$8,000 dollars needed to complete the project. As a plea asking for pledges from the public, the advertisement stated:

The suggestion of the Committee in charge is that this park memorial be a gift of the people. Not a donation of a few, but that the funds come from popular subscription, from the many citizens who will consider it a privilege to give. There are perhaps fifty patriotic and public spirited citizens who could finance this project. That however would not build the right sentiment for this worthy movement.

Although it is unknown how much the public ultimately supported the project financially, work began in late 1923 and early 1924 clearing the quarry and constructing the horseshoe-shaped pool. According to the prepared design layout, a portion of the landscaping was also started with the planting of various specimens of trees and flowers. On February 22, 1924 the Inter-Club Park Committee transferred ownership of the Sunken Gardens to the City of Huntington. The Committee retained ownership of the land to the

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south of the Sunken Gardens. Following an initial dedication by Mayor Clarence Juillerat that same year, work continued under the City's supervision. Two limestone foot bridges and a fountain were constructed by a local contractor named Martin Koch. To implement the only other entrance, a tunnel located under West Park Drive, two stone stairways were built at the northeast and southeast corners of the quarry. The tunnel, now slightly modified in the dimensions of its original opening, remains as the most prominent feature retained from when the site was an active quarry.

In a short article published by the The Huntington Press on September 5, 1924, the Sunken Gardens were reported as nearly complete. The article stated:

Workmen have been engaged in beautifying the old quarry at the end of West Park Drive into one of the most attractive and beautiful spots in this section of the state, and the quarry has gradually taken on the appearance of a beauty spot. Stone steps and rustic bridges have been erected while the drive on the road has been completed. Flowers and shrubbery will be added to the quarry before long.

The Sunken Gardens was promoted not only as a beautification effort but also as a tourist attraction and destination. The development of the automobile was a significant factor in the creation and success of the Sunken Gardens. Reportedly the Gardens were listed in all the major maps and guide books for Indiana with hundreds of visitors traveling U. S. 24 for this "natural" detour. The automobile was the best and sometimes the only means of "getting away" and experiencing new sights. In 1924, the average cost of a Ford Model T was \$299.00. That same year, more than 10 million automobiles were on the road (Jakle 1994). As federal highway acts of 1916 and 1921 required improved road conditions for the automobile, the highway network was growing into a new national landscape. As part of the Sunken Gardens project, the bridge at West Park Drive was completely reconstructed to include rustic, fieldstone knee walls and pillars with light standards. Creating a monumental gateway, the new bridge design was a signal to the approaching motorist of a unique sight not to be missed.

With car ownership growing, millions of Americans embarked on adventurous motor vacations that were then described as "a-gypsying" activities. By the early 1920s, autocampers strayed from the roadside and stopped at public campgrounds set aside for the motorists in municipal parks. Between 3,000 and 6,000 municipal autocamps were reported to exist in the country. In Indiana, 233 such camps were identified in 1926 (Belasco 1977). Tourists would spend money on gas, oil, food, supplies, and souvenirs.

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Typically operated by a community's park board, the autocamp would be set up within a centrally-located park near downtown--within easy access to stores. If the autocamp was particularly well-appointed, a community could be assured to be promoted by word of mouth as a preferred destination.

The City of Huntington, under the leadership of Mayor Charles W. Snider, announced in 1926 that it had established a tourist camp opposite of Memorial Park and the Sunken Gardens on the south side of West Park Drive. Operated by park caretaker Henry Kramer, the tourist camp included a house or shelter where tourists could find protection from storms. An outdoor furnace was also provided although there reportedly were no overnight facilities (The Huntington Press, July 15). As a souvenir, tourists could buy a color postcard of the Sunken Gardens, made from a photograph and created by the E. C. Kropp Company in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. A period photograph shows West Park Drive at the Sunken Gardens completely lined with automobiles traveling both directions.

Between 1926 and 1929, work continued on the Sunken Gardens. In July of 1926, an artesian well was being created and three wagon loads of wild ferns were planted. Up to four feet in height, the ferns were transplanted by city employees from an area near Silver Lake in Kosciusko County. This same year, plans were presented, but never realized, to build a 4,000 seat amphitheater nearby to be used for band concerts and Chautauqua events. In May, 1928, James Van Pelt, city light superintendent, began to wire the Sunken Gardens with a new lighting system. Replacing the former method of stringing lights on wires, which was considered at the time "unsightly," the new system included ten reflectors. The reflectors were to be arranged so that light would be "thrown into the garden from various angles, illuminating all of it" (The Huntington Press 1928). Although never constructed, a dancing pavilion and service station were proposed to be built at this time south of the Sunken Gardens.

In 1928, the City also began to improve the area immediately east of the Sunken Gardens with the creation of the Shakespeare Garden. After purchasing the land from the Keefer and Bailey Stone Company, a two-story house located on the site, occupied by Hezekiah Fair, blacksmith for Keefer, was moved up Diamond Street to German Street. Maintained by the Shakespeare Club, the Shakespeare Garden included varieties of flowers and plants which were known and admired by William Shakespeare.

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Seven years after it was first proposed, the Sunken Gardens were considered completed by 1929 and officially dedicated by the City of Huntington. The November 1929 issue of Better Homes and Gardens featured the Sunken Gardens with before and after photographs. The heading for the short article stated, "Conquering the New Frontier of Civilized Ugliness." The article stated in part:

One who drives into the city from the west is greeted by a spectacle of radiant flowers and green shrubs, flanked by cool pools of water, the borders set off by stone bridges and walks. It seems to be a deliberately ordered sunken garden, made by a prodigious amount of excavation. In this Indiana city, the sunken garden has been made a center of interest, and the beautification idea radiated out from this center. It is now the nucleus of the city-park system.

In 1929, a landscape design was also created for Memorial Park by then-city engineer Paul Smith.

History After Period of Significance

Up into the 1930s, two retired men were employed by the City to work in the Sunken Gardens year round. In the 1954 issue of the Newcomer's Key to Huntington, it stated "(t)he (sunken) garden is one of the beauty spots of the state. Each year it is visited by hundreds of tourists...who marvel at its artistic beauty." During this same time, two biology professors from Huntington College were reported to be involved in a restoration of the Sunken Gardens.

By the summer of 1964, the Sunken Gardens had taken on an appearance much like the former quarry and considered an eyesore. Most of the original plantings no longer remained, stone seawalls were eroding into the pool, and other features had been damaged by vandalism. Recognizing the ability to attract tourists to the Sunken Gardens and add to the "tourist appeal of Huntington County," the Huntington Heritage Days Committee organized a public fundraising drive to cover the costs of a full restoration (Huntington Herald Press). Mayor Robert Ambler proposed fixing the walkways and steps into the Gardens; replacing the crumbling retaining seawall around the pool; restocking the pool with fish; reactivating the fountain; repairing the bridges; installing lighting; and, placing a chain-link fence around the rim of the site for safety purposes. The Huntington Garden Club, Roadside Council, Aquarium Club, and American Legion all assisted in the effort by contributing plants, flowers, and fish for the pool.

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A new retaining seawall was constructed of concrete to replace the original wall in March of 1967. The new wall is more angular in form but follows the original dimensions of the horseshoe-shaped pool. The entire area was fenced and a walk for observation built around the top. Through the cooperation of the State Conservation Department, a particular type of American Lotus was planted in the pool. The American Legion Post donated an American flag and pole which was to be erected on the upper level of the Gardens.

Eleven years later in 1978, landscape architect Bill Eviston of Louis C. Petro and Associates in Fort Wayne presented plans to the Park Board for a renovation of the Sunken Gardens. With two phases of proposed work, the first phase was estimated to cost more than \$25,000. Plans called for constructing a wooden shelter structure on the upper level and creating "trellis-like" structures over the walkways. These elements were not implemented. An advisory board was established to make recommendations to the Park Board concerning any proposed projects. The following year, about \$6,000 had been spent on upgrades to the Gardens and volunteers had cleaned the debris out of the pool and installed aerators. Additional projects included the installation of drainage tile around the pool; the building of a 240-foot long limestone planter along the north end and a similar planter along the east side; planting nearly 100 shrubs at the upper level; and, constructing a "Sunken Gardens" sign along West Park Drive. All further work was halted when the Park Board was abolished in 1980.

In the early 1980s, a few changes occurred to the Sunken Gardens. In January of 1983, a wood seating deck was erected on the top of the former well house. A small wood gazebo was constructed at the center of the land peninsula surrounded by the pool. The southeast staircase was reconfigured with a larger wood replacement. A picnic table with attached gable roof was built at the northeast corner of the upper level. Four new light standards were installed in the land peninsula and at the landing of each staircase. The Sunken Gardens also became known as the "Christmas Sunken Gardens." During the holiday season, the Gardens are decorated with lights and oversized candles placed on the bridges to, once again, attract tourists to the area.

Landscape Architectural Significance

In the early part of the twentieth century, an increasing number of landscape architects were called upon to create designs for public projects, usually urban parks and parkways. Site selection was an important factor. The Sunken Gardens was a consciously

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developed design to transform and beautify an eyesore. Early advocates of parks and natural areas promoted the need to replace and upgrade areas containing undesirable land uses. Some examples are the redevelopment of city dumps, cemeteries, slums, and industrial areas located along waterfronts. In other instances, many sites selected for parks were areas considered, at the time, unusable for other purposes. One example is Chicago's South Park system which previously was a swamp and considered a wasteland. The Sunken Gardens represents both ideas and can be described as an early practice of urban renewal and slum clearance.

The Sunken Gardens is a good example of a picturesque design, creating a natural and informal environment. The picturesque theory was best promoted by Frederick Law Olmstead and other contemporaries such as Jens Jensen who designed a number of landscapes in Indiana. Architects Blarry and Rary created a design which included meandering pathways, changes in grade, plantings suggesting an almost tropical setting, and the artificially created horseshoe-shaped pool. All of these elements, combined, created a sense a permanence. Although a relatively small site, the design expresses intimate private settings as well as open areas where large numbers of the public can gather.

The Sunken Gardens can be compared to other historic design landscapes in Indiana. Garfield Park in Indianapolis is a much larger example containing botanical gardens developed circa 1916 and called the Sunken Gardens. Designed by an Indianapolis architectural firm, Vonnegut and Boyn, the Sunken Gardens feature cast concrete elements, flower beds, and trademark, electric fountains. Overall, the Sunken Gardens at Garfield Park is a more formal, organized design which does not feature a large body of water or the dramatic change in elevation. Huntington's Sunken Gardens can also be compared to Battell Park in Mishawaka, listed on the National Register (1-11-96). This park features a dramatic rock garden which was built and designed by WPA workers in the 1930s. The rock garden used similar materials including fieldstone and was created from an existing element, a natural ravine sloping towards the river. Unlike the Sunken Gardens, Battell Park's rock garden was not designed by a landscape architect, created from a quarry, or sponsored and funded by local civic organizations.

The Sunken Gardens are outstanding for its creative and unique reuse of a former limestone quarry. In Indiana, there are no other known examples of an early limestone quarry adapted for a new use as a sunken garden. As a design incorporating the

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principles of the picturesque theory, the Sunken Gardens are significant. The Sunken Gardens are a good representation of the collective contribution of civic leaders and community groups to improve and beautify their community. The increasing popularity of the automobile, private ownership rates, and early travel is also an important correlation to the development and success of the Sunken Gardens. Since constructed, the Gardens have continued to operate in its original purpose as a landscape design, passive recreational environment, and as a tourist attraction for the entire county. Nearly all of the primary structural features are in tact and convey the sense and feeling of the original design. The elaborate West Park Drive bridge remains today as originally designed and constructed. The horseshoe-shaped pool is still in place and operation as the integral feature of the overall design and setting. Foot bridges, staircases, and a well house portray the level of craftsmanship and type of materials which were used. Adequate documentation also exists to restore the original plant materials of the Sunken Gardens.

In 1996, the Sunken Gardens, specifically its bridge at West Park Drive, was listed by Huntington Alert Inc. as one of five most endangered structures in Huntington County. Although they have endured some changes and deterioration caused by vandalism and exposure to the elements over the years, the Sunken Gardens retain sufficient integrity to portray the landscape design significance and the role as an important and unique resource for Huntington.

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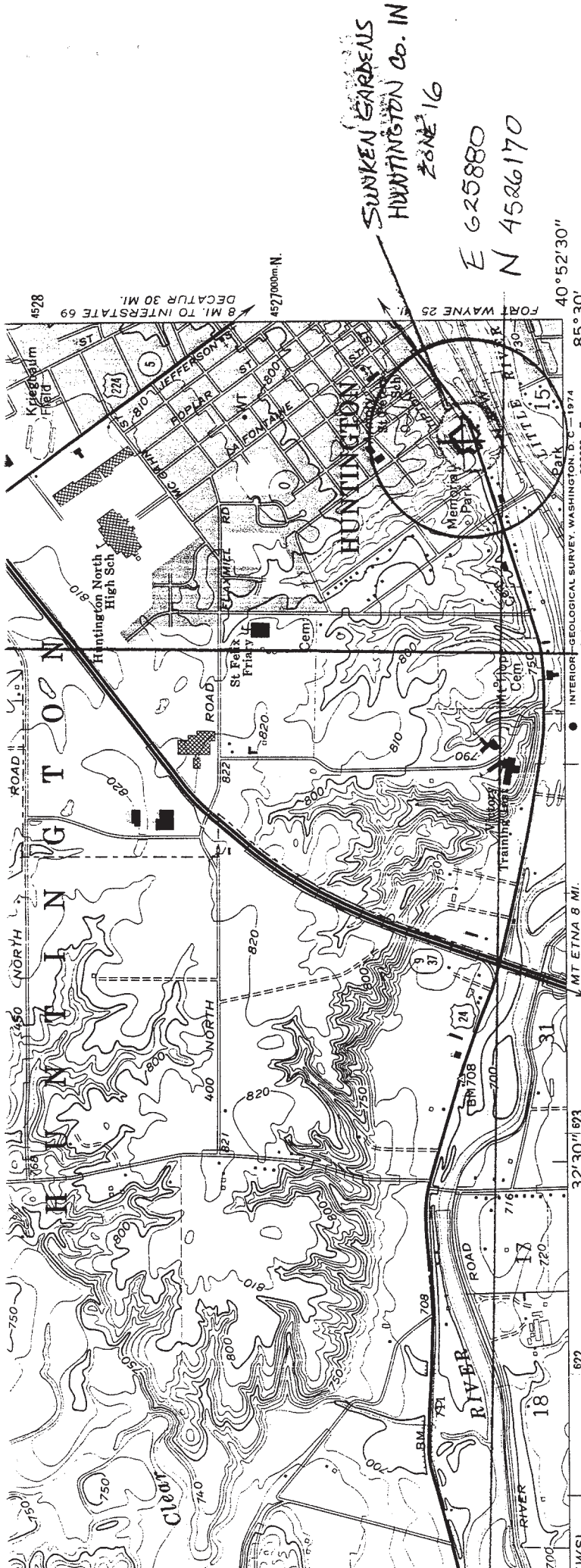
Sunken Gardens
Huntington County, Indiana

Verbal Boundary Description

See attached map.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the original boundaries of the Sunken Gardens.

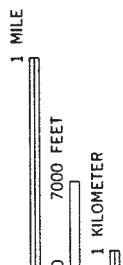


SUNKEN GARDENS
HUNTINGTON CO. IN
ZONE 16
E 625880
N 4526170

(MAJENICA)
3965 IV SW

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Primary highway, hard surface Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface Unimproved road
- Interstate Route U. S. Route State Route



VERTICAL INTERVAL 10 FEET
MEAN SEA LEVEL

QUADRANGLE LOCATION



BIPPUS, IND.
N4052.5—W8530/7.5

1972

AMS 3865 I NE—SERIES V851

NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
RESOURCES, INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204
S AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.