

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 instruction in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (formerly 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 Taylor Field

other names/site number Site # JE0912, Taylor Memorial Field

2. Location

street & number 1201 E. 16th St. not for publication

city or town Pine Bluff vicinity

state: Arkansas code: AR county: Jefferson code: 069 zip code: 71601

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.)

Cathie Mather

10/29/09

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency or Tribal government

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

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau or Tribal government

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

Taylor Field
Name of Property

Jefferson, AR
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	
0	2	buildings
0	0	sites
2	3	structures
0	0	objects
2	5	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

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

An Ambition to Be Preferred: New Deal
Recovery Efforts and Architecture in Arkansas,
1933-1943

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture/Sports Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture/Sports Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other/Plain Traditional

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>Concrete</u>
walls	<u>Brick</u>
roof	<u>metal</u>
other	_____

Narrative Description

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

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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 a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

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

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture
Social History
Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance
1939-1959

Significant Dates
1939, 1940, 1948, 1950, 1956

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Works Progress Administration, Builder
Mitchell Seligman, Architect

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Taylor Field
Name of Property

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 4

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------|---|--|
| 1. | <u>1 / 5 /</u>
Zone | <u>5 / 9 / 2 / 9 / 2 / 1</u>
Easting | <u>3 / 7 / 8 / 6 / 3 / 9 / 4 /</u>
Northing |
| 2. | <u> / /</u>
Zone | <u> / / / / / / / /</u>
Easting | <u> / / / / / / / /</u>
Northing |
| 3. | <u> / /</u>
Zone | <u> / / / / / / / /</u>
Easting | <u> / / / / / / / /</u>
Northing |
| 4. | <u> / /</u>
Zone | <u> / / / / / / / /</u>
Easting | <u> / / / / / / / /</u>
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 Prepared by George A. Lea, III; Edited by Travis Ratermann (Survey Historian)

organization _____ date October 26, 2009

street & number 323 Center Street, 1500 Towers Building telephone 501-324-9874

city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

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 images 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 Pine Bluff

street & number 200 E. 8th telephone 870-543-1835

city or town Pine Bluff state AR zip code 71601

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.* A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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Taylor Field

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An Ambition to Be Preferred: New Deal Recovery Efforts and Architecture in Arkansas, 1933-1943

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

DESCRIPTION

Taylor Field is an excellent example of a Works Progress Administration (WPA) constructed baseball stadium from the New Deal era. While a fine example of New Deal era construction, it also relays the story of those unemployed in central Arkansas through finding work on the construction of the stadium. Located in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, at 1201 East 16th Street, Taylor Field was designed by Mitchell Seligman a prominent Pine Bluff architect and constructed using WPA labor. This dramatic 4-acre stadium built between 1939 and 1940 features a "U" shaped grandstand, with the WPA logo stamped into the concrete paths and walls. Below grade dugouts and a large wooden outfield fence, are exemplary of other fields built by WPA labor during this time period. When completed in 1940, Taylor Field was constructed in a Plain/Traditional style similar to other WPA constructed stadiums. Taylor Field is one of only two WPA baseball stadiums left in the State of Arkansas.

The site on which Taylor Field is located is generally set in a commercial neighborhood in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. To the east of the stadium is a small commercial area located along South Ohio Street and to the west, the old Indiana Street School is adjacent to the stadium property. On the north side of the site is an old factory whose property surrounds the stadium's property through right of ways and access roads. To the south of the stadium is East 16th Street. The Taylor Field property includes two contributing structures (the stadium and field), two non-contributing buildings (concession stand, and Pine Bluff High School Zebra Field House), and three non-contributing structures (aluminum bleachers, fences and batting cages).

Stadium Grandstand-Contributing

The two-story brick grandstand rests on a cast concrete foundation, and has load-bearing brick exterior walls. The overall massing consists of an irregular "U"-shaped two-story grandstand capped with a cantilevered, corrugated metal roof with symmetrically placed supports throughout the seating area. There are also two light standards, which are located at the intersections of the "U"-shaped grandstand that adds another element of height to the massing of the grandstand area.

As one approaches Taylor Field through the entrance gate, one is fronted with the backside of the grandstand on the first base line. The back side of the grandstand is predominantly tan painted brick. Large sections of the brick are constructed between the columns of green painted concrete. The top five rows of bleachers are cantilevered over the brick exterior wall along the back side of the grandstand. This first section of the brick grandstand comprises Sections "A" and "B."

Within this bricked section on the backside of the stands along both the third base and first base wings are six small windows, about 2 feet square, and about 8 feet off the ground. All of these windows are barred and boarded, but once were used for ventilation for the locker rooms located along the north and east side of the grandstand. Located on the southeast side of the grandstand is a small overhang made of wood paneling that is used for line-up cards and other flyers to be seen. To the far left of this first baseline section of grandstand, is a recessed doorway that leads to a women's restroom.

To the left of the women's restroom, is a concrete ramp within a tan brick tunnel, which allows spectators to have access to the central portion, or home plate portion, of the grandstands. Inside the tunnel, on the east wall, is a black painted plaque with gold lettering, which reads "USA 1940 WPA." To the left of the tunnel is

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door "1" which has a small window above it to provide ventilation into the storage area. To the left of the door is another small window located at the intersection of the first base portion of the grandstand and the home plate portion. Continuing to the left on to the backside of the home plate portion of the grandstand is a small window about 6 feet off the ground continuing the fenestration and window pattern.

Located to the left of the small window is door "2," which again leads to a storage area. Located just past door "2" is another plaque painted black with gold lettering, which reads "USA 1940 WPA." To the left of the plaque is door "3" allowing access to yet another storage area. Two windows about 8 feet off the ground are placed between doors "3" and "4," while door "4" is also located to the left of the two windows. Directly adjacent to door "4" is door "5," which allows access in the concession stand area located to the left of door "5." The large concession stand is constructed using nine, panel windows to make up the front of the concession stand. Located to the left of the concession stand is another set of two doors, doors "7" and "6." Each of the doors is paired with a window directly above the doorway continuing the doorway fenestration throughout the grandstands. Continuing left along the back side of the grandstand is the portion along the third base line. Located between the third base line tunnel access and the corner of the home plate portion is door "8," which leads to another storage area. Located above door "8" is another window with another window on the right side of the door which is located about 6 feet off the ground. To the left of door "8" is the second tunnel which provides spectators access to the central portion of the third base line grandstands. On the north side of the tunnel, facing south, stamped into the concrete is another WPA logo, which reads "USA 1940 WPA." The plaque is again painted black with gold lettering.

The third base portion of the grandstand is a duplicate of the first base portion of the grandstand with a recessed doorway into the men's bathroom just to the left of the tunnel and there are another six small windows, about 2 feet square, and about 8 feet off the ground. As previously mentioned, there are two doorways along the north side of the grandstand, one used for storage and the other is used as an umpire's dressing room. The small concrete stairs along the north side of the grandstand allows spectators access to the third base portion of the stands.

The locker rooms can be accessed through wooden panel doors at each end of the grandstand. The locker room along the first baseline is situated between the brick grandstand and a newly constructed ADA accessible ramp which is constructed over top of the existing concrete staircase leading into the spectator seating area. The duplicate of the staircase can be seen on the north side of the grandstand. Upon entering, the locker room there is a large open area used for seating and changing. In the back left corner of the locker room is a shower room, which still retains plumbing fixtures, and in the back right corner is a small bathroom, which consists of a sink and a toilet. Currently the two locker rooms are used for other purposes. The room on the first base side is now an office, while the third base side is an umpire's dressing room. Located adjacent to the locker room doors is another smaller door which provides access to an area beneath the spectator seating area and is currently used for storage. The two seating sections located along the first and third base lines were not officially completed until the beginning of the 1940 season.

Looking from the northeast, the grandstand is a "U"-shaped structure that wraps around the field from about half way between home plate and first base, to about half way between home plate and third base. The structure itself is constructed of concrete, concrete block, and brick. There are 11 rows of bleachers divided into 5 sections. The bleachers have wood seats. Each section of bleachers is painted a different color. Beginning along the first base side is Section "A," painted orange. A set of steps leads up the grandstand along the east side of the bleachers. Section "B" is the next section, which is painted mint green. Section

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"C" is the center section and is painted blue. Making the turn down the third baseline is Section "D," painted yellow, and ending with Section "E," painted red. Sections "A" - "B" and "B" - "C" are separated by steps going to the top of the grandstand. Sections "C" - "D" and "D" - "E" are also separated by steps ascending to the top of the grandstand. A set of steps, similar to those on the east end, ascending to the top of the grandstand are found at the northern end of the grandstand at the end of Section "E." Between Sections "A" and "B" and Sections "D" and "E" are tunnels that come from outside the grandstand into the stadium as previously mentioned.

Located below the main walkway and the eleven rows of bleachers in the general seating area, there are ground level box seats. Between the box seats and bleachers is a concrete walkway. Each slab on the walkway is stamped "USA WPA." On the first base side there are 16 box seats in two rows. The first box seating area along the first base line has been adapted to provide an area that is handicapped accessible. The floor of this box is a wood deck over concrete, which makes it level with the walkway, while the other box seats are constructed with just poured concrete. There are 18 original box seats in the section behind home plate.

Twelve additional box seats were added by constructing a concrete block wall in the 1940s. These boxes match the motif of the original structure. There are 15 box seats in two rows on the third base side of the grandstand. One of these on the top row, where the turn is made from home plate section to the third base section, is also handicapped accessible. The boxes are all separated with round metal pipe, painted tan.

A press box is located at the top of the grandstand in the center of section "C." The press box is now a split level room enclosed with concrete block and six, plate-glass windows facing the field and two on each end. The hollow core aluminum door into the press box is located on the first base side of the press box. There are also two windows in the rear of the press box, one located on the north side of the west elevation and one on the south side of the west elevation. A set of metal pipe ascends to the top of the grandstand on each end and serves as a hand rail, while a concrete and metal rail banister runs the length of the top of the grandstand.

Baseball Field-Contributing

The baseball field was completed by the beginning of the 1939 season. The field consists of the playing surface, two dugouts, two bullpens and the ten light posts. The playing field is encompassed between the outfield fence, concrete backstop and chain-link fences along each foul line. The field is oriented to the northeast. The infield of Taylor field is set to the specifics regulated by Major league Baseball, which states that the infield is to be ninety feet square with a base, a white canvas or rubber bag, set at every ninety feet along that square, with second base being located 127 feet, 3 3/8" from home plate, a five-sided slab of whitened rubber. The first, second, and third base bags are fifteen inches square, and not more than five inches thick. Located around home plate is a dirt area, measured at a 26' foot circle, allowing for the home plate, right-handed and left-handed batter's boxes and a catcher's box.¹

There are also two dugouts located on the field, one on the first base side and one on the third base side with both dugouts located below grade. The dugouts are constructed of concrete blocks. On each end of the dugouts are nine wooden helmet boxes. In addition to the helmet boxes, there is a water fountain located toward the outfield end and a place for a box fan at the opposite end of the dugout. Seating inside of the

¹ Major League Baseball, http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/downloads/y2008/official_rules/01_objectives_of_the_game.pdf.

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dugout was constructed using concrete blocks stacked two wide and two high with a poured concrete cap. Both dugouts are roofed with corrugated metal.

The infield was originally graded so that the base lines and home plate were on a level plane with the rest of the field. However, over time the baseline has been used to such an extent that the infield grass is higher than the baseline creating a "lip" on the playing surface. The "pitching mound" is located 60'6" from home plate. Located directly behind home plate is a "U"-shaped cut in the grass, which is infilled with a pressed cork sign that reads "Taylor Field." Also, located in foul territory along the first and third base lines there is another area where the grass has been cut out and more pressed cork used as infill to create a coach's box.

The outfield is designated between two foul lines extending two sides of the square, often associated with the first and third base lines. The distance from home plate to the left field foul pole is 315 feet; 360 feet to left center field; 390 to center; and 315 feet to right field. A gravel strip is located along the outfield fence forming what is known as a "warning track." The warning track located at Taylor field is roughly seven feet wide and runs along the entire outfield fence. Located around the baseball field are ten light poles, eight of which were dismantled and reconstructed from the Missouri-Pacific Park. There are also two bull pens located along either side of the first and third base line. Each of these bullpens contains two pitcher's mounds and each are situated perpendicular to the outfield.

Pine Bluff High School Zebra Field House- Non-contributing

The Pine Bluff High School, Zebra Field House is located to the north of the grandstand, out of play, along the third base line. The green corrugated metal Field House was constructed c. 1990. The south elevation of the indoor training facility consists of one louvered window located along the southwestern corner of the building roughly eight feet above the ground, while the west elevation consists of three of the same style of window equally spaced along the corrugated metal surface. The north elevation consists only of the green corrugated metal sheathing. The east elevation consists of a single aluminum, hollow-core door located near the southeast corner of the building, with a louvered window directly to the right of the door. Also a set of aluminum, hollow-core, double-doors are located just off-set to the right of the center of the east elevation. Another small louvered window is located to the right of the double doors.

Batting cages- Non-contributing

The batting cages located within the boundaries are situated just to the north of the Pine Bluff Zebra Field House. The first batting cage is located along the northeast corner of the Field House. This first batting cage is constructed of sixteen, four-by-four posts, eight on each side. These support twenty-one fink trusses creating a front gable roof, sheathed in corrugated metal. Within the wooden supports for the roofing, there are metal supports used to hold up nylon netting. The second batting cage is located adjacent to the west of the first. The economy batting cage is constructed of a four steel frames, which supports a nylon netting material.

Fences- Non-contributing

The outfield wall was nearly completed by March 27, 1939. At that time, the ten foot high fence was constructed of wooden board. However, at an unknown later date, the fencing was changed to incorporate corrugated metal from center field through to left field, with wooden fencing from center field into right field. In 1996, the fence had an additional ten feet of fencing added to increase the fence to twenty feet high to

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accommodate the Pine Bluff Locomotives, of the Big South League. On each side, from the outfield wall to the end of the dugouts, a chain-link fence differentiates in-play and out-of-play areas. Chain link is also along the tops of the walls separating the box seats from the field. Just out of play, even with the outfield wall, on the left and right field sides are bullpens. Each bullpen contains two pitcher's mounds and each run perpendicular to the field.

Aluminum Bleachers-Non-Contributing

The one and one-half story, rectangular-shaped aluminum bleachers were originally constructed c.1990. The bleachers, located along the first base line consist of 15 rows and are divided by two isles creating three sections. The entire set of bleachers is 100 feet long. A triple rail of round metal piping goes up each end and around the back side at the top, creating both a hand rail and back support for the top row of bleachers.

Concession Stand-Non-Contributing

The one-story, irregular-shaped, concrete-block, concession stand was added to the site in the 1980s. The concession stand, located along the first base line consists of a concrete block form with wooden decking used a ramp, and a combined rubber roof and corrugated metal roof. The wooden ramp, located on the east side of the building, makes a large L-shape across the east elevation of the building. The ramp begins along the east elevation facing north before turning 90 degrees to the west to the service window on the north elevation of the concession stand. Here the ramp is enclosed by metal bars and a metal-barred door. Located within the L-shaped ramp and the L-shaped portion of the building is a small shed roof, which is sheathed in corrugated metal. Beneath the shed roof is an aluminum hollow-core door which provides access into the concession area and a small window located to the right of the door.

The south elevation consist of a centrally located doorway, elevated four feet off the ground, which is used to unload concession stand items from delivery vehicles. On the west elevation of the building, between the concession stand and the grandstand, is a concrete ramp that leads up to the walkway on the grandstand. This provides access to another service window and access door into the concession stand. The service window is located toward the northwest corner of the north elevation, while the main entry to the stand is centrally located along the west elevation.

Integrity

Overall, Taylor Field retains remarkable integrity. The original grandstand and field appear almost exactly as built in 1940. The changes that have occurred over the years (i.e., construction of the PBHS Field House, concession stand, aluminum bleachers, batting cages and addition high to the outfield fence) have added new facilities at the stadium and field while maintaining the look and feel of the original 1940 layout. If it was not for the addition of these facilities, Taylor Field would not have been able to compete with the newer fields in the city or area, and might have already met the fate of so many other WPA built stadiums throughout the United States. Finally, the neighborhood surrounding Taylor Field still reflects the commercial character of the area that was present when the Taylor Field was constructed, ending in 1940.

The fact that Taylor Field has retained a degree of integrity is all the more remarkable given the fact

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that it has remained in operation since it opened in November 1940, with the help of the Pine Bluff High School Zebra baseball team. The overall integrity of the facility is also significant since many of the other WPA built baseball stadiums in Arkansas and the region have been demolished.

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SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY

Taylor Field in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A** for its association with baseball in Pine Bluff and its association with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and **Criterion C** for its architecture as the work of the WPA. Taylor Field is an elaborate and well preserved example of a Works Progress Administration (WPA) constructed baseball stadiums during the New Deal era as well helping those still unemployed with finding work in central Arkansas. Designed by Mitchell Seligman a prominent Pine Bluff architect and constructed using WPA labor, this dramatic 4-acre stadium built between 1939 and 1940, features an "U" shaped grandstand, with the WPA logo stamped into the concrete paths and walls, below grade dugouts, and a large wooden outfield fence, which exemplifies other fields built by WPA labor during this time period. Taylor Field is one of only two WPA baseball stadiums left in the State of Arkansas.

ELABORATION

Baseball has a long history in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Hosting a baseball club gave the citizens of the city something to do to pass their time, while also providing the citizens an entertainment possibility. One must bear in mind that citizens have not always had television and even when the technology became available, it was not readily accessible to many of the citizens of this area. One way they could accomplish entertainment outdoors was to head out to the ballpark. Prior to the construction of Taylor Field, the Pine Bluff Judges, a part of the Pine Bluff Baseball Club, called Missouri-Pacific Park home. Missouri-Pacific Park was built in 1930, when professional baseball returned to Pine Bluff after a 20 year hiatus. Missouri-Pacific Park was constructed in a manner similar to Taylor Field.² County Judge H.H. Williams leased a tract of land in the vicinity of Third Avenue and Plum Street, from the Missouri-Pacific Railroad, hence the name Missouri-Pacific Park. Funding for the field was limited, so county equipment was used to build the field. The bleachers and grandstand were constructed entirely with donated materials or with materials purchased through donations.³ In 1931 the grandstand and dressing rooms were destroyed by a fire. The structure was rebuilt, with donated material, but the structure was not nearly as stable as the original facility. By the end of the 1938 season, after only seven years of use, the park was in such poor condition that club officials worried the structure would collapse and led baseball leaders to pursue the construction of a new facility.⁴ By 1939, the WPA was in operation in Arkansas and the city turned to this agency to seek the means for building a new ballpark.

Taylor Field was constructed in 1939-1940 using WPA labor and funds. By 1940, the WPA was already vastly improving parks and other recreational facilities throughout the United States. Initially, the Division of Engineering and Construction projects, which oversaw the recreational parks and facilities, was strictly confined to park development and an even greater amount of effort was put into park improvements with landscaping, tree planting and road construction as the main features of the program. However, by later in the program's history, park work was "broaden to include the

² James W. Leslie, *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Taylor Field: Struggle From Pro to Amateur: Local Fans Fight to Give City Professional Club," June 11, 1972, p. 21.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

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construction of swimming pools, stadiums, and other recreational facilities.”⁵ Consequently, to assist in distributing funds the agency had a Division of Applications and Information to receive suggestions for projects while an Advisory Committee on Allotments sent plans to the President for approval.⁶ It was as part of this later period that Taylor Field was subsequently constructed by the WPA.

Taylor Field began as a land grant to the City of Pine Bluff from Pinchback Taylor, Sr. on December 31, 1938. According to the agreement, the property, located in the Geisreiter’s addition in the vicinity of 17th and Ohio Streets in southeast Pine Bluff, was to be used for recreational purposes.⁷ In addition to donating the land, Taylor paid \$900 in back taxes so that the city could have a clear title.⁸ Soon after the city acquired the property the federal Works Progress Administration was assigned a project to build an outdoor recreational facility. Taylor wanted the city to continue to have a professional baseball team, and in addition to the land, he also donated much time and money to maintain a club in Pine Bluff.⁹

The means for continuing professional baseball in 1939 were being sought by local baseball leaders as the local club found itself in an all too familiar position of being in dire financial straits. By this time, President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s WPA programs were in full swing. As such, Mayor McGaughy applied for a grant to have a recreational park built in the east part of the city, where 23 lots were deeded to the city of Pine Bluff by Pinchback and Ross Taylor, on December 31, 1938. The lots were deeded with the agreement that they would be used for the sole purpose of a recreation field. Should the property ever be used for any other purpose, ownership of the land would revert back to the Taylor Estate.¹⁰ Using agency guidelines, Pine Bluff Mayor James P. McGaughy applied for funds to build not only the baseball field, but also tennis courts, softball and football fields, and other outdoor recreational fields. As part of the application, the WPA officials agreed to provide all necessary labor and a percentage of the materials needed for constructing the grandstand.¹¹ However, the baseball field was all that was completed for the project.¹²

Despite receiving funds from the WPA, the city officials were still forced to complete a fundraising campaign. This was a challenging task. In addition to needing a new playing field, five years of the Depression had left the existing baseball club in financial arrears and on the verge of collapse.

⁵ United State, Federal Works Agency, *Final Report on the WPA Program* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print Office, 1947), 50.

⁶ Basil Rauch, *The History of the New Deal, 1933-1938*, 2nd ed., (New York: Octagon Books, 1975), p. 163-164.

⁷ Deed, Pinchback Taylor and Wife to City of Pine Bluff, Arkansas, December 31, 1938. Though the site was often referred to as being located at 17th Avenue and Ohio Street, its exact location was at 16th and Pennsylvania. However, 17th Avenue (now Harding Avenue) and Ohio Street is a major intersection within one block of the field.

⁸ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, “Mayor Names Local Baseball Commission,” January 21, 1939, p. 6.

⁹ Pine Bluff has deep roots in baseball, be it amateur or professional. The first professional club came to the city in 1903. The Judges arrived in 1930 after a hiatus of professional baseball in Pine Bluff. The club got the name from a contest that was started to offer the club a nickname. Mrs. C.B. Quintrell suggested “The Judges” to honor Judge R.H. Williams who had devoted much of his time and county resources to help organize the club.

¹⁰ James W. Leslie, *Pine Bluff Commercial*, “Taylor Field: Struggle From Pro to Amateur: Local Fans Fight to Give City Professional Club,” June 11, 1972, p. 21. and Deed, Pinchback Taylor and Wife to City of Pine Bluff, Arkansas, December 31, 1938.

¹¹ Jim Leslie, “Local Baseball: From Riches to Rags,” *Pine Bluff Commercial*, August 13, 1969, p. 22.

¹² WPA Central Office Files, 1939-1942, Ala.—Arkansas, Gen M/F, T937, Roll 2. Index Cards.

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Part of the city's problems was tied to depressed economic conditions throughout the state. Arkansas had a rougher time than most states during the Depression. Due to an ill-timed highway construction program, the state had a higher per capita debt than any other in the nation. This plagued the state in the 1930's and hindered efforts to offer aid to the unemployed.¹³

Taylor's enthusiasm and energy soon got other people involved with the project. Intent on upgrading the city's baseball program, he persuaded club treasurer Wendell Lee and George Merrick, business manager of the local club; the Pine Bluff Judges, to attend a baseball meeting in New Orleans in January 1939. Their stated goal was to convince Brooklyn Dodgers Vice President Larry P. MacPhail to visit Pine Bluff and sign an agreement with the local club for the 1939 season.¹⁴

Lee and Merrick were successful in getting MacPhail to agree to sponsor the Judges, the Class "C" club, in the Brooklyn Dodgers farm system. However, MacPhail included a stipulation; the Judges would have to have a professional quality ball park to call home.¹⁵

Anticipating the professional relationship with the Dodgers, the Pine Bluff City Council created the Pine Bluff Baseball Commission on January 16.¹⁶ Mayor McGaughy was authorized to appoint five members to comprise the commission, each commissioner serving a two year term. The commission was charged with raising money, overseeing the construction of a facility, and maintaining it once it was completed to meet professional baseball standards.¹⁷ The commission was responsible with ensuring that all plans were being carried out. Also, the ordinance stipulated that the physical plant be under the direction of the commission when the field was completed.¹⁸ To this day a city commission, now called the Taylor Field Commission, maintains and oversees Taylor Field.

In response to the Dodgers' conditions, McGaughy called a meeting for January 20, to select members to serve on a Pine Bluff Baseball Commission and to discuss plans for the future of professional baseball in Pine Bluff. At the meeting, Wendell Lee, gave a financial report covering the Judges' past three years, 1935-1938, which reflected a grim financial outlook for the club. As of December 31, 1938, the club had \$44.85 in their account, but also had outstanding bills totaling \$359.98.¹⁹ This was a familiar position for the local club. The Judges' limited assets, included "...eight players, lighting equipment, uniforms, goodwill value, and...incidental equipment."²⁰

Following Lee's report, Taylor took the floor and announced that the future looked bright for professional baseball in the city, assuming local citizens could provide adequate facilities. Mayor

¹³ David Ellery Rison, *Arkansas During the Great Depression*, PhD. Thesis, UCLA, 1974, p. 40.

¹⁴ Jim Leslie, "Taylor Field: Struggle From Pro to Amateur: Local Fans Fight to Give City Professional Club," *Pine Bluff Commercial*, June 11, 1972, p. 21.

¹⁵ Jim Leslie, "Taylor Field: Struggle From Pro to Amateur: Local Fans Fight to Give City Professional Club," *Pine Bluff Commercial*, June 11, 1972, p. 21.

¹⁶ Pine Bluff City Council Minutes, January 16, 1939.

¹⁷ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Pine Bluff to Have Baseball Commission: City Council Passes Ordinance Creating Group Last Night," January 17, 1939.

¹⁸ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Mayor Names Local Baseball Commission," January 21, 1939, p. 6.

¹⁹ Jim Leslie, "Taylor Field: Struggle From Pro to Amateur: Local Fans Fight to Give City Professional Club," *Pine Bluff Commercial*, June 11, 1972, p. 21-22.

²⁰ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Mayor Names Local Baseball Commission," January 21, 1939, p. 6.

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McGaughy then reported that the city had received the WPA contract and construction had already begun on a new ballpark, on property Taylor had donated near 17th and Ohio streets. The American Legion and organized labor agreed to provide additional labor to assist in the construction.²¹

The optimism of the local club officials was easy to understand as the situation could not have been much grimmer. Nonetheless, Taylor and Lee announced on the evening of January 23, 1939, that short of filing the paperwork an agreement was reached with the Brooklyn Dodgers whereby the Pine Bluff Judges would be a club affiliate for the 1939 season. Affiliation with the Dodgers notwithstanding, the Judges were still owned by the local baseball club and controlled by the commission.²²

Blueprints for the new baseball park were prepared by Mitchell Selligman, a well-known local architect. Mayor McGaughy, Taylor, and a number of other local businessmen then set out to find the necessary construction materials. One of their prime sources was the salvage from old buildings. For example, the Miller Theater on State Street, for years a local landmark, had fallen into disrepair. Owned by the Quattlebaum family, the building had been taken over by the Trust Department at Simmons First National Bank. As the bank's trust officer and executor of the Quattlebaum Estate, Jo Nichol prepared to raze the building. Mayor McGaughy approached Nichol and persuaded him to donate the bricks to the city.²³ According to the mayor, "The brick from this building, which was demolished with WPA labor, composed the city's largest contribution to the Taylor Field project."²⁴

Lumber, used for the roof and other parts of the project, was also salvaged from the old theater. And WPA workers also retrieved material from an old warehouse, which the city had purchased from the Pine Bluff Mill and Lumber Company.²⁵

Four days after the council passed the ordinance, Mayor McGaughy called a city-wide baseball meeting for 7:30 p.m. on a Friday night.²⁶ It was also at this meeting that the park was named "Taylor Park." President of the Pine Bluff Chamber of Commerce, Emmett Sanders, made a recommendation, which the commission approved, to name the new facility "Taylor Park" in honor of Pinchback Taylor.²⁷ The property is now known as Taylor Memorial Field.

The Commission held its first meeting at Taylor's office on January 25, 1939, and promptly elected Taylor president. The body also made plans to raise \$4,500 for the new baseball park, which was all that was lacking in the \$13,500 committed to the project. That figure included over \$1,500 needed immediately to construct a fence around the field in time to allow the Brooklyn Dodgers farm club from

²¹ Jim Leslie, "Taylor Field: Struggle From Pro to Amateur: Local Fans Fight to Give City Professional Club," *Pine Bluff Commercial*, June 11, 1972, p. 21-22.

²² *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Baseball Plans With Brooklyn Dodgers Are Completed," January 24, 1939, p. 6.

²³ Jim Leslie, "Taylor Field: Struggle From Pro to Amateur: Local Fans Fight to Give City Professional Club," *Pine Bluff Commercial*, June 11, 1972, p. 22

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Work Begins on City's New Outdoor Center: Jo Nichol Donates Material for New Recreational Project," January 9, 1939, p. 7.

²⁶ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Mayor Calls Baseball Meet Friday Night: Future Plans for National Pastime Here to Be Discussed," January 18, 1939, p. 7.

²⁷ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Mayor Names Local Baseball Commission," January 21, 1939, p. 6.

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Dayton, Ohio, to hold spring training in Pine Bluff.²⁸ The commissioners also agreed to ask fans for a \$1 donation to assist with fundraising efforts, and designated a number of sites to accept the donations.

The new field was laid out facing the northeast, making the left field wall in the west and the right field wall in the south. The length of the field down either line (left and right field) was to be 315 feet while it was 390 at straight away centerfield. The outfield was enclosed by a ten foot high fence. The grandstand was to accommodate 1800 spectators, with additional bleacher seating for 600 spectators, bringing the total capacity to 2400. Access to the field and parking were accommodated by converting city owned lots on the south and west sides of the field into parking lots, and constructing additional roads from nearby highways.²⁹ By March 8, 1939, Smith indicated that work was steadily progressing on the new ballpark and that with favorable weather conditions, the field could be put in good shape without much trouble. At this point, the fence was nearly complete and work began on the grandstand when a long delayed steel order arrived in early March.³⁰

By March 27, Pine Bluff baseball leaders were optimistically predicting that the 1939 season would open on the new field. The fence and the diamond were nearing completion and the grandstand was taking shape. Leaders were optimistic that when the facility, described as being worth \$40,000, was complete it would be one of the finest baseball stadiums in the South.³¹ Ed Smith, also announced on March 27, that Taylor Field would definitely be opened for the Judges' home opener on April 19. Smith indicated that the main section of the grandstand would be completed by that time and the field would also be in good shape. However, the sections of the grandstand behind the first and third base dugouts would most likely not be completed. Nonetheless, any seating shortage would be solved by constructing temporary seating. The infield had been leveled and sodded, and work was scheduled to begin on the outfield in the first week of April.³² The lights and light poles from Missouri-Pacific Park were removed and placed at the new ballpark in time for the home opener, a night game against the Hot Springs Bathers.

As opening day approached record setting rains drenched the area and complicated planning for the opening game. Moreover, the opener was a night game and the newly installed lighting system had not been tested. The lights were in place, but all AP&L workers were out on service calls due to the recent storms, and could not test the system until the morning of the home opener. But, the field was still in good shape and team officials expected that it would be ready.³³

Local promoters expected a large number of spectators from Hot Springs to follow their club to Pine Bluff for the opening of Cotton States League play. In preparation for the large crowd, construction

²⁸ There is no indication that the Dayton club came to train in Pine Bluff. However, it is clear that the plans for this served as a motivating factor to get the field completed as soon as possible.

²⁹ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Construction Progresses on Pine Bluff's New Recreational Center," February 21, 1939, p. 7.

³⁰ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Judges Obtain Young Third Baseman," March 8, 1939, p. 6.

³¹ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Judges' Training Camp to Include Ten Veterans And Seven Rookies," March 27, 1939, p. 8.,

³² *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Judges To Open 1939 Season In New Park: Whether Opening Game Will Be Played at Night Is Undetermined," March 28, 1939, p. 7.

³³ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Judges Are Ready For First Game Tomorrow Night," April 18, 1939, p. 9.

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crews erected 1,500 temporary grandstand seats while fans anxiously watched storm clouds and worried over the possibility of a rainout.³⁴ On game day Pine Bluff celebrated with a parade down Main Street that featured the high school marching band and players from both the Judges and the Bathers.³⁵

While obstacles were consistently being overcome by club officials, progress continued on the new ballpark. Slowly, but surely, the progress was being realized by the community at large. Mayor McGauphy announced that the concrete grandstand at Taylor Field would be opened on May 15 in a game against the Greenwood Crackers.³⁶ However, only the center section, which included two rows of box seats located directly behind home plate, was completed by that date. In addition to the opening of the new grandstand, fans welcomed their new manager, Andy Cohen.³⁷

Work continued on the first and third baseline wings. The grandstand, with the baseline wings, seated about 1,500 and was constructed entirely of steel and concrete. The structure also housed both home and visiting club dressing rooms. Team dugouts were constructed in the first and third baseline wings.³⁸ The roof was completed over the center and third base sections of the grandstand while the club was on the road in late June and early July.³⁹

Taylor Field was more than just a sports venue, though. In 1948, 1950, and 1956, Taylor Field was transformed into a political stage as political rallies were being held at the field. In 1948, Sidney McMath opened his gubernatorial campaign at Taylor Field. In 1950, he opened his reelection campaign at the site. In 1956, the local Jaycees hosted a meet the candidate night, which featured many candidates for local, state, and national office. Included on the slate of candidates to speak was Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus, remembered for his role in the 1957 Little Rock Central High School Crisis.

Since professional baseball left Pine Bluff for good in 1955, with the exception of the one season in 1996, the field has been home to Pine Bluff's standout amateur baseball programs, such as Babe Ruth and Pine Bluff High School. However, the city won a bid to host the Babe Ruth World Series in 1972. That year proved fateful. A few baseball dignitaries were in attendance for the event. Mrs. Claire Ruth (widow of Babe Ruth), Jerome "Dizzy" Dean, and Vernon "Lefty" Gomez attended part of the series. "Lefty" Gomez was to be the keynote speaker for the event, but was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame only days before his scheduled appearance. To replace him, "Dizzy" Dean was brought in as the

³⁴ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Judges Open Season Tonight Against Hot Springs Bathers: Manager Jimmy Shevlin Selects Joe Rodney To Hurl Opening Game," April 19, 1939, p.8.

³⁵ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Pine Bluff Judges Seek First Taylor Field Victory Tonight: Mayor McGauphy Will Throw First Ball at 'Pine Bluff Night'," April 20, 1939, p. 6.

³⁶ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Taylor Field's Grandstand to Open Monday: Center Section Stand and Boxes Will Be Ready for Use," May 10, 1939, p. 8., *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Grandstand at Taylor Field to Open Monday Night," May 13, 1939, p. 9.

³⁷ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Grandstand at Taylor Field to Open Monday Night," May 13, 1939, p. 9., *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Judges Leave for Greenwood Today; Shevlin Resigns," May 9, 1939, p. 6.

³⁸ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Taylor Field's Grandstand to Open Monday: Center Section Stand and Boxes Will Be Ready for Use," May 10, 1939, p. 8. The old dressing rooms are still used today. However, the first base side room is used as an office, while the third base side room is used as an umpire's room.

³⁹ *Pine Bluff Commercial*, "Judges Return Home Against Clarksdale Red Sox Tonight; Pine Bluff Drops Final of Two-Game Series To Hot Springs Bathers, 7-6," July 6, 1939, p. 7.

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speaker. However, Gomez still made an appearance at the tournament; his first public appearance after being inducted into the Hall of Fame. It has since hosted, annually, a tournament of at least state, if not regional, consequence. Each tournament typically brings in dignitaries from baseball's past to visit the city and attend part of the events. Tournaments are not limited to Babe Ruth baseball, but also include Arkansas High School baseball and in 1995 also held the National Association of Amateur Baseball Tournament.

During this period of time, relatively little has changed in the appearance of Taylor Field over the years. An extra set of box seats was added behind the catcher's area. A concession stand was added along the first baseline in the 1970s. However, the materials used match the motif of the field. As well, a section of aluminum bleachers was added down the right field line in the 1990s. Of the additions to the property, all were made to accommodate for any of the numerous tournaments that have been, and continue to be held, at the facility. The original seating will accommodate about 2,000 fans. The original outfield wall was ten feet in height. In the middle 1990s ten additional feet were added to make the outfield wall twenty feet high, to accommodate for the Pine Bluff Locomotives who only existed for one season, 1996.

Statement of Significance

Taylor Field in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A** for its association with baseball in Pine Bluff and its association with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and **Criterion C** for its architecture as the work of the WPA. Taylor Field is still a significant part of the baseball culture and city history in Pine Bluff from its inception in 1939. Built at the height of the WPA construction era, it is one of only two WPA built baseball stadiums left in Arkansas. The stadium and the events that took place during construction and even through the present time, means a lot to the community of Pine Bluff and those surrounding communities around it. The activities that have taken place within the stadium did not just end after the stadium was constructed, even though it brought employment to those in the area, but has continued to provide a place to gather and watch recreational activities like baseball to those in Pine Bluff. The continued tradition of baseball in Pine Bluff at Taylor Field, allows the memory of the WPA projects to continue to be remembered in the community of Pine Bluff, not only through the playing of the sport but also the representative nature of baseball architecture built by the WPA.

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Pine Bluff Commercial. "Pinchback Taylor Elected President of Pine Bluff Judges: Pine Bluff Club Opens Training This Afternoon at Missouri-Pacific Park." April 3, 1939. p. 5.

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Pine Bluff Commercial. "Memphis Red Sox Play Black Barons at Park Here Tonight." June 7, 1940. p. 8.

Pine Bluff Commercial. "Black Judges To Play Stuttgart Here Sunday." June 11, 1940. p. 6.

Pine Bluff Commercial. "Memphis to Play St. Louis In Negro League Game Here." June 22, 1940. p. 7.

Pine Bluff Commercial. "Jesse Owens to Run a Race Horse Here." July 8, 1940. p. 7.

Pine Bluff Commercial. "Toledo Crawfords Play Birmingham at Taylor Field Tonight." July 12, 1940. p. 6.

Pine Bluff Commercial. "Toledo Crawfords Play Memphis Red Sox at Taylor Field July 23." July 18, 1940. p. 8.

Pine Bluff Commercial. "Pine Bluff Lone Stars Play Forrest City Here Sunday." July 27, 1940. p. 7.

Pine Bluff Commercial. "Memphis Red Sox Face St. Louis Stars Here Wednesday Night." July 30, 1940. p. 2.

Pine Bluff Commercial. "Kansas City Monarchs To Play in Pine Bluff." August 1, 1940. p. 7.

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Pine Bluff Commercial. "Memphis Red Sox to Play St. Louis Stars Here Thursday Night." August 21, 1940. p. 11.

Pine Bluff Commercial. "Cincinnati Buckeyes Play Birmingham Black Barons Here Friday." September 2, 1940. p. 8.

Pine Bluff Commercial. "Governor Race Oratory Begins To Flow Today." June 17, 1950. p. 1.

Pine Bluff Commercial. "Arkansas's Dizzy Dean, Vernon (Lefty) Gomez To Join BR Visitors." May 21, 1972. p. 25.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots One (1), Two (2), Seven (7), and Eight (8), in Block Eight (8);

Lots Two (2), Three (3), Four (4), Five (5), Six (6), Seven (7), and Eight (8), in Block Nine (9);

Lots One (1), Two (2), Three (3), Four (4), Five (5), Six (6), Seven (7), and Eight (8), in Block Twelve (12);

Lots One (1), Two (2), Seven (7), and Eight (8), in Block Thirteen (13);

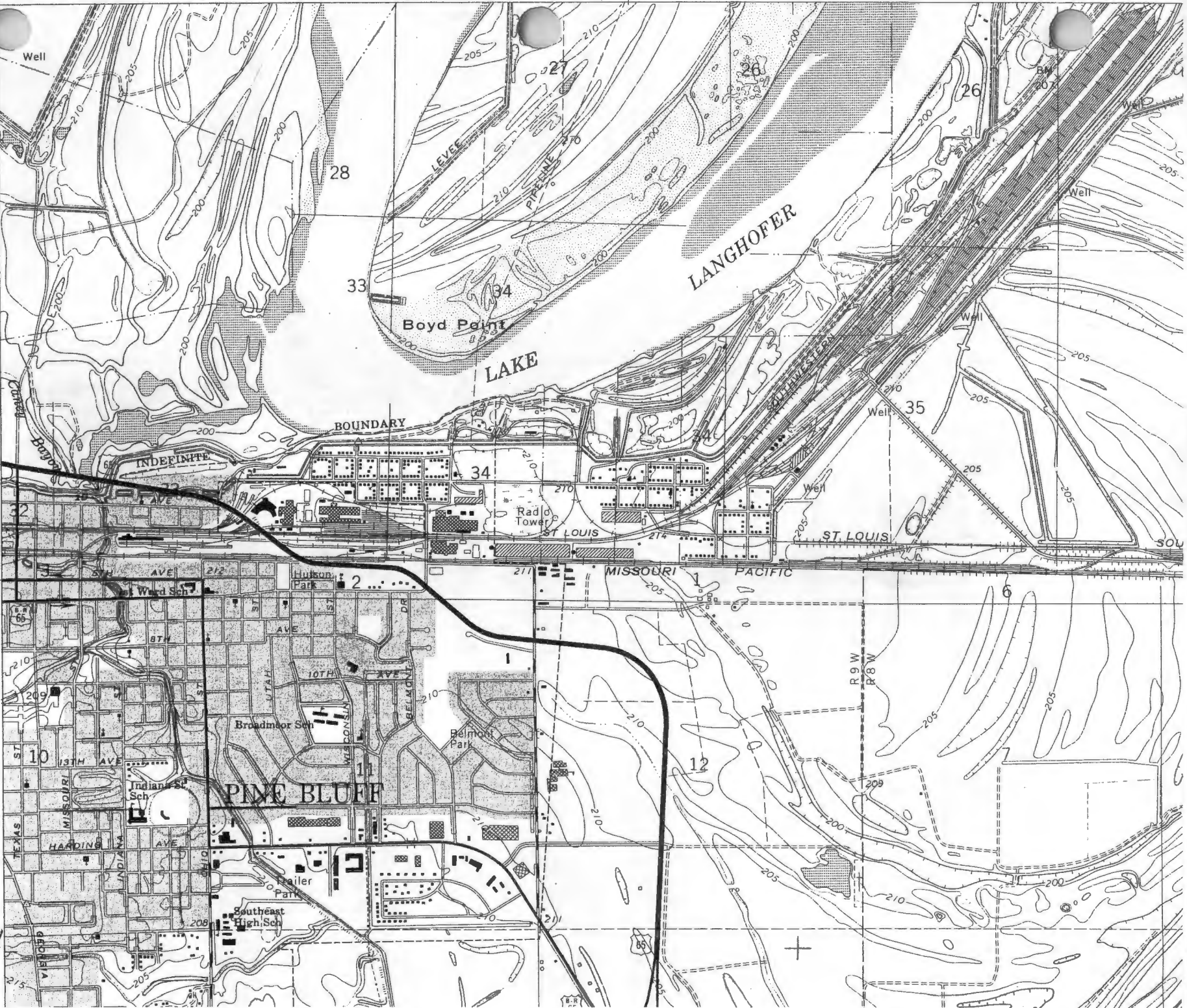
All being in the Geisreiter's Sub-division of the NE, of the SE, of Section 10, Township 6 South, Range 9 West.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This was the original boundary of the land that was donated by Pinchback and Ross Taylor for the purpose of constructing the field historically.

34°15'

3790000m.N



3789

T. 5 S.

3788

LITTLE ROCK 44 MI.
WHITEHALL 7 MI.

T. 6 S.

3786

12'30"

LYLOR FIELD
PINE BLUFF
JEFFERSON
COUNTY,
ARKANSAS

M: 15/59291/3786394

