

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Pioneer Park

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: Roughly bounded by Parkhill Drive, 3rd St. West, and Virginia Lane

City or town: Billings State: MT County: Yellowstone

Not For Publication: N/A

Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A B X C D

<p>_____</p> <p>Signature of certifying official/Title:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Date</p>
<p>In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____</p> <p>Signature of commenting official:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Title :</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Date</p> <p>_____</p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- 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(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	structures
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>8</u>	<u>5</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LANDSCAPE: Park

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Outdoor Recreation

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LANDSCAPE: Park

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Outdoor Recreation

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: Pleasure Garden

OTHER: Reform Park

OTHER: Recreation Facility Park

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY: Craftsman

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: EARTH; WOOD: Weatherboard; STONE: Sandstone; METAL: Bronze; ASPHALT; CONCRETE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Pioneer Park, named in 1918 by Mayor W. Lee Mains to honor of the pioneers who settled in eastern Montana and founded the City of Billings, is a municipal park located northeast of the Yellowstone River, and approximately a half mile northwest of downtown Billings, Montana. From the emphasis on the reform park of the early nineteenth century, which marked a shift from the stress on aesthetics to functionalism, to the recreation facilities that emphasized leisure activities, Pioneer Park is a locally significant public landscape that includes buildings and structures representative of the evolution of changes in park design over the course of the twentieth century. Pioneer Park is significant in the areas of Community Planning and Development, Landscape Architecture, and Entertainment/Recreation. The park comprises approximately 32.5 acres and includes areas for both active and passive recreational use, as well as distinctive landscape features, architectural resources, memorial objects, and public utility structures. The most notable of the natural defining features is the park's topography, which varies from relatively flat meadows to steep graded hills and gentle slopes and is characterized by mature tree cover. Notable manmade features include tennis courts, a modern playground, a wading pool, and playing fields. Pioneer Park retains a high level of integrity due to its original location, setting, feeling, and association that have remained intact. In addition to the original park improvements, such as various built resources, the park's feeling is particularly intact. Although there have been later additions which contribute to shifts in workmanship and

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materials, such as the playground and various buildings, these elements have served to keep the park as a relevant and enjoyable resource to the people of Billings over the course of nearly 100 years. Ultimately, Pioneer Park remains significant as Billings' primary area of public recreation, as intended upon construction more than one hundred years ago. The park contains eight contributing resources: two buildings, four structures, one site, and one object. There are also five noncontributing resources: one building and four structures.

Narrative Description

In 1918, the City of Billings acquired approximately 35 acres at the northwestern part of the city to establish a park and recreation area. The Parks Board contracted local landscape architect Dorothy M. Gray to draw up plans for the new city park, eventually known as Pioneer Park. Gray envisioned a plan that included several pioneer memorials, a lake created through the damming of an adjacent creek, the northern areas left natural, and the southern areas developed for recreation. Throughout the years, user needs and demands, as well as trends in park use theory, influenced the development of Pioneer Park. These influences have led to the use of the park for recreational activities, commemorative purposes, and public ceremonies and events throughout the decades. Although the original master plan has not been located, several of Gray's early ideas were certainly incorporated into the park design and accepted by the city.¹ The park has developed over time as land, labor, and financial resources have become available. Gray clearly held a vision for the potential of the area as a public space to enhance people's lives and beautify the City of Billings. The result is just that, a unified park containing a variety of elements that today retain the overall feeling and appearance that Gray envisioned almost one hundred years ago.

Setting & Location

Pioneer Park is a municipal park of approximately 32.5 acres located in the North Elevation neighborhood of Billings, Montana. The park is bounded on the north by Parkhill Drive, on the east by 3rd Street West, on the south by Billings Senior High School's Daylis Stadium, and on the west by Virginia Lane. Main vehicular access to the park is from Virginia Lane, Parkhill Drive, and 3rd Street West with a small thirteen-spot parking lot off of Virginia Lane. Handsome residential neighborhoods surround the park on the west, north, and east sides. South and southeast of the park stand residential apartments, Billings Senior High School, and Daylis Stadium. Although residential area and streets surround the park, the various meadows and trees within the park provide visitors with a retreat from the residential surroundings and nearby urban areas of Billings.

Until the mid-twentieth century, the character of the area now encompassed by Pioneer Park and the surrounding area stayed largely rural. The surrounding area did not begin to develop into a suburban neighborhood until the 1920s and continued through the 1940s. A 1926 photograph of the park taken from a passing aircraft depicts the largely undeveloped nature of the surrounding

¹ Although the original Gray plans remain to be located, the 2010 Pioneer Park Master Plan Update includes text that states, "Miss Gray's accepted plan design called for...". The Land Group, Inc., *Pioneer Park Master Plan Update 2010* (Coeur d'Alene, ID, 2010), 18.

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area, including small clusters of buildings to the east, few roadways, and large expanses of open fields (Reference Additional Documentation Historic Images #1).² The same photograph provides a good representation of the area just prior to the suburban development of the area. A 1940 photograph taken from a passing aircraft shows the burgeoning suburban neighborhoods and growth around Pioneer Park especially from the east to the north (Reference Additional Documentation #8).³

General Site Description

Pioneer Park with its open spaces, wooded areas, and creek provides areas for both passive and active recreational use. The northern and western portions of the park exhibit moderately wooded rolling steep terrain while the southeastern portion encompasses a relatively low sloped topography with large open spaces used for recreational activities. There are no paved roadways transecting the park. The only roadways border the park on the eastern, northern, and western sides. As of 2016, the park boasts a total of 811 trees, 594 deciduous and 217 coniferous. Throughout the park and around its perimeter winds a total of 1.27 miles of various paved pathways. There are 0.66 miles of concrete sidewalks around the perimeter of the park with a boulevard of grass and trees buffering it from the street. There are also 0.62 miles of pathway in the interior of the greenspace, or natural open space, navigating through each of the diverse areas of the park providing guests with a variety of experiences.⁴ The following narrative provides a brief overview of the general character of these areas.

Hard-surface tennis courts, a ballfield, and a playground are located in the eastern and southeastern portions of the park, where the topography is relatively flat. Historically, recreational amenities like restrooms, a wading pool, and seating have facilitated public use of this area of the park. This portion of the park is located off of 3rd Street West.

Crooked Creek, known by a variety of monikers throughout the years, including McKenzie/McKinsey Creek, Snake Creek, and Spring Creek, runs mainly through the center of the park, extending from the northwestern portion and through a culvert diagonally south for 0.29 miles to the southeast into a concrete headwall. The creek had formerly originated from a spring but by the time the park was under development in the 1920s the creek's water was largely generated from irrigation canal spillways. Historically, the creek was adjacent to the site of three Works Progress Administration (WPA)-built lily ponds until a levee of the Billings Bench Water Association (BBWA) canal failed in 1937. This led to a significant flood that washed away the ponds and large portions of earth south onto Grand Avenue and beyond. No work has since been done to Crooked Creek to rehabilitate its original relationship to the park nor has any effort been made to repair the damage left in the wake of the flood. Currently, the creek flows through a riparian corridor that includes cottonwoods, willows, and other various trees and turf. Along the creek are two foot bridges constructed of wood with steel pipe railing

² A. Baumgartner, *Elevation to SE*. 1926. Western Heritage Center, Billings, MT.

³ Chapple's-Petek Photo, Inc., *Aerial Photo of Billings, Montana*. 1940. Billings Public Library, Billings, MT.

⁴ The Land Group, Inc., *Pioneer Park Master Plan Update 2010*, 25-30.

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built after the flood. The southern bridge is part of the central pathway through the park and the northern bridge is located where the creek turns from the southeasterly direction to the south.

PIONEER PARK RESOURCE DESCRIPTIONS

The following describes the resources of Pioneer Park. All resources are evaluated as either contributing or noncontributing based upon the areas of significance of Entertainment/Recreation, Community Planning and Development, and Landscape Architecture within the defined period of significance, 1918-1970. Noncontributing resources were designated as such due to age, less than fifty years old, or because they retain insufficient historic integrity dating to the period of significance.

Spatial Arrangement, Open Space, and Circulation (One contributing site)

Pioneer Park contains five general areas where the community tends to congregate and recreate aside from the more formalized and improved areas, such as the tennis courts, wading pool, and playground (Refer to Exhibit 4). These areas tend to be more open and generally free of man-made improvements and are referred to as "open space."

The first open space (Open Space 1) is topographically well-defined by its slopes and hills and lies in the area west of Crooked Creek. The Zimmerman Center, contributing Resource #1, sits immediately west of Open Space 1, off Virginia Lane. The Zimmerman Center is a 2,200 square foot brick building constructed in 1948 as a fire station, but now functions as a facility for the Billings Parks and Recreation Department. The building is currently used for various recreational programs or small civic community meetings. Immediately south of the Zimmerman Center is the park's only adequately sized parking lot with thirteen spaces that service the Zimmerman Center. This area of the park where the Zimmerman Center and parking lot sit is mainly flat and displays a surrounding green space that topographically slopes to the east toward Crooked Creek. A mixture of various trees characterizes the landscape in this open space (National Register Photos #6-8).

Clockwise from Open Space 1 lies the second defined open space of Pioneer Park (Open Space 2). This open space occupies a significant portion of the north-central area of the park and consists of an open green space with mixed trees, creating a varied canopy. This area is located south of Parkhill Drive and measures under an acre in size. The northern open area contains some of the highest elevations in the park, providing a variety of spaces, microclimates, and view sheds downhill and to the south (National Register Photos #9-10). Gray designed this northern area to remain as undisturbed as possible to provide a genuine natural setting for picnic grounds. For this reason, the northern area is without defined spaces for organized recreational activities, although the disc-golf course plays through this area.

The third open space, Open Space 3, is the central open area located just to the south of Open Space 2. The central space slopes downhill to the west of the northern tennis courts and is bordered on the west by Crooked Creek. It measures approximately two acres in size and is utilized as a natural open-air amphitheater for community events. The gradual sloping of the hillside to the north functions as spectator seating for the community during events (National

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Register Photos #11-13). The space, although mainly intended and used as an open-air amphitheater, is also a multi-use area for general recreation. Immediately east of Open Space 3 lie three north-south aligned tennis courts (Resource #2). These asphalt courts are cut into the hillside, which is retained by a sandstone wall built in the 1930s by the WPA.

Open Space 4 lies immediately southeast of Open Space 3 and measures a half-acre in size. This smaller open space displays a formal area directly south of the northern tennis courts adjacent to the pioneer memorial area. It contains a small meadow surrounded by various trees. Memorials dedicated to the pioneers of Billings are situated on the eastern side of this space, adjacent to Third Street West (Reference Photos #19-23). This area contains the remnants of the original oval-shaped formal flower garden from Dorothy M. Gray's design where she imagined a grand park entrance off Avenue E. Originally Gray envisioned the placement of a statue of a pioneer to greet visitors. Instead, the pioneers' memorial tablet dedicated in 1932 is located here along with the 2003 memorial dedicated to the pioneers and their descendants.

Directly south of this open space is a wading pool (Resource #5) that existed prior to Gray's planning and design. The wading pool has been updated since its original construction. The wading pool is adjoined by a 652-square-foot concrete masonry unit restroom (Resource #6). Southwest of the formal Open Space 4 and due west of the wading pool and restroom is the park's modern playground. The playground area (Resource #3) measures about 20,000 square feet (0.46 acres) in size and originated from the 1972 Pioneer Park master plan.⁵ It is bordered by a concrete sidewalk that connects to the park's central pathway. The playground, renovated in 2015, includes 10,000 square feet of sand play surface, mixed play equipment, and a centrally located roofed play structure. Directly surrounding the playground area are several low leveled turfed berms (National Register Photos #24-25).

The last and largest of the open spaces, Open Space 5, is comprised of about two and a half acres and lays at the south side of Pioneer Park. It is a sizeable multi-use area that can accommodate various activities within its large meadow and tree-lined boundaries. The greenspace displays the remnants of a little-used baseball field with a dilapidated chain-link backstop and overgrown dirt infield (National Register Photos #41-45). The multi-use space is used for a variety of events by various community groups. A line of trees borders the area to the south and separates the park from the high school's Daylis Stadium.

A park storage building (Resource #9) sits immediately east of the southeast corner of Open Space 5. Six north-south aligned tennis courts (Resource #8) lie to the east and are the oldest features of the park, constructed sometime before 1920 (Reference Additional Documentation Historic Image #1) and upgraded in the 1970s to an asphalt playing surface with surrounding chain-link fencing.⁶ South of the southern tennis courts (Resource #8) and north of the storage building (Resource #9) are two east-west aligned horseshoe pits also available for recreational community use.

⁵ The Land Group, Inc., *Pioneer Park Master Plan Update 2010*, 24-45.

⁶ The Land Group, Inc., *Pioneer Park Master Plan Update 2010*, 29-51.

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Circulation

Although the circulation pattern of Pioneer Park has evolved since the park's inception, several of the main walking arteries remain. Walks or roads meant to accommodate motorized vehicles were intentionally never constructed in the park. Historically, all walkways, regardless of where they began, led to the center of the park. This remains true today. Although a few of the smaller trails that appear in early aerial photographs no longer remain, the primary and largest trail that appears on a 1937 aerial photo continues to provide access from the south border of the park to its center. Though likely a dirt walkway in the early years of the park, today it is paved; however, it continues to follow the same footprint it did historically. A smaller paved trail leads from the park's center to the tennis courts, wading pool, and restrooms to the east; the exact location of this trail has meandered slightly through the years, though its destination to the east has remained the same. Similarly, a paved trail that follows its original footprint branches off near the park's center and proceeds to the Zimmerman Center to the west. A dirt trail that originated from the park's center and led to just north of the north tennis courts no longer remains, nor does a dirt trail from the park's center to the northwest portion of the park. In the case of the latter trail, however, while the trail no longer remains, the route itself is still quite evident as it follows an alignment of trees that bordered the original path.

The lack of roads in Pioneer Park is deliberate. Gray's original plan proposed no roads, instead parking was planned along the park's boundaries. Later plans discussed the possibility of parking areas and roads within the park, but none ever materialized, preserving Gray's original vision.

Resource #1 (Zimmerman Center, one contributing building)

The Zimmerman Center, built in 1948 as a municipal fire station for an approximate cost of \$20,000, is a 2,200-square-foot, rectangular-shaped building located immediately west of Open Space 1.⁷ The one-story building has an off-centered front gabled, gently sloping, corrugated metal roof with a centrally located brick chimney. The chimney features a concrete top and metal pipe. The station is a red brick building built using the 6-to-1 American bond and sits on a concrete foundation. The doors in the brick portion of the building feature soldier course headers while all the windows feature soldier course headers and brick sills.

The primary (west) elevation has two aluminum three-lite windows covered with metal security screens. Located to the west of the windows is a hipped-roof enclosed porch clad in clapboard siding with a two-lite window and an access door addition to the south. The primary elevation also contains an enclosed clapboard-sided composite board porch beneath a red gingerbread-detailed roofline under the eaves. A birdhouse sits in the top of the gable on the west elevation, directly above a wood sign that reads "Zimmerman Center" (National Register Photos #2-3).

The north elevation features a brick façade and contains four metal security screen-covered windows. Three two-lite windows are covered, located on the brick façade with an additional

⁷ The Land Group, Inc., *Pioneer Park Master Plan Update 2010*, 40.

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covered window located on the visible clapboard siding enclosed porch (National Register Photo #4).

The east, rear elevation features a gable with an attic vent. In the off-centered gabled volume is an oversized red person door with one metal screened window on each side, one three-lite window to the east and one two-lite window to the west. There is a small, covered vent above the left window off-centered to the east (National Register Photo #5).

The southern elevation features another red door with three windows to the east: two two-lite windows and one three-lite window. Also visible from this elevation, is a gutter just above the door entry way (Reference Photo #1).

The building was originally built as a municipal fire station in an effort to provide better protection to an expanding residential district at the western edge of the city.⁸ In 1960, the city council moved the city recreation department into the Pioneer Park fire station which made recreation programs more accessible for local city youth.⁹ The building eventually became a recreation and event space, and was renamed the Zimmerman Center after the long-tenured recreation department director, Walt Zimmerman.

Just south of the Zimmerman Center lies a 13-stall parking lot and driveway entry. Aerial photographs from 1951 indicate the presence of the parking lot. It measures about 65 feet north-south by 75 feet east-west. A narrow greenbelt of grass, with a few deciduous trees, concribes the lot to the east, west, and south.

While some changes affecting integrity of design and materials have occurred to the original presentation of the building, especially the west elevation with the replacement of an overhead vehicle door with a large window and the enclosure of the porch, the changes are not sufficient to preclude the building from being a contributing resource of the district, especially in light of the strong integrity of location, setting, feeling, workmanship, and association.

Resources #2 (Northern Tennis Courts and sandstone wall, counted as one contributing structure)

The three northern tennis courts constructed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) are located on the east side of Pioneer Park. The WPA-constructed tennis courts feature a rectangular plan surrounded by a chain-link fence to block errant balls (National Register Photos #14-18). The courts (from fence to fence) measure 50 feet north-south by 180 feet east-west. The surface of the tennis courts originally displayed sandstone but were upgraded to asphalt in the 1970s and most recently to post-tensioned concrete.¹⁰

Surrounding the tennis courts on the north, west, and south sides is a sandstone wall also built by the WPA during the Great Depression in 1936. The wall features multi-tier construction capped

⁸ "Building a Bigger Billings," *The Herald*, 5 August 1948.

⁹ Paul Newman, "Hold Temper - Fire Chief Bucks Eviction Order," *The Billings Gazette*, 8 December 1960.

¹⁰ The Land Group, Inc., *Pioneer Park Master Plan Update 2010*, 45.

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with a sandstone ledge and extends around three-quarters of the perimeter of the courts. The wall is constructed of sandstone of varying tan colors, laid in random courses with mortar. Two pillars roughly twice the height of the majority of the wall mark the beginning and end of the wall. Overhead lighting poles were added and the courts once again renovated in Fall 2015.

While improvements over the years have diminished integrity of materials and workmanship of the tennis courts, they still retain sufficient integrity of location, feeling, setting, design, and association to be considered a contributing resource of the park, as does the retaining wall.

Resource #3 (Playground, one noncontributing structure)

The playground is located near the southeast corner of the park. Some iteration of a playground has occupied this location since the late 1920s. In the spring of 2015, the city replaced the 1950s playground equipment with brand new play structures.¹¹ The playground area is surrounded by small berms and has a small sandpit located on the eastern side of the play area. This playground is a noncontributing resource, as no evidence of the historic nature of the playground remains (National Register Photos #24-25).

Resource #4 (Memorials, counted as one contributing object)

Two memorials sit on a concrete sidewalk surrounded by landscaping at the intersection of 3rd Street West and Avenue E in the eastern open area of Pioneer Park. The southern memorial is a bronze tablet dedicated in 1932 to celebrate the Billings semi-centennial. It features an Art Deco border detailing attached to a concrete base. This tablet displays the inscription “DEDICATED JULY 27, 1932 TO THE PIONEERS WHO FOUNDED THE CITY OF BILLINGS MONTANA; 1882 – 1932.” The second memorial is a granite boulder with an engraved inscription that reads, “100 YEARS; DEDICATED TO THE PIONEERS OF EASTERN MONTANA AND THEIR DESCENDANTS 1903 – 2003.” A black buffalo carving appears above the inscription (National Register Photos #19-20). These objects are considered a contributing resource despite the age of the second memorial. While not 50 years of age, the 2003 memorial speaks to the 1932 monument without diminishing the integrity of the original monument.

Resource #5 (Wading Pool, one noncontributing structure)

The 1,200-square-foot wading pool located immediately to the north of the restrooms (Resource #7) is constructed of concrete and surrounded by 3,186 square feet of concrete deck. It is located off of 3rd Street West to the east and surrounded by black steel frame fencing. Two gates allow entry to the pool, one at the southwest end and the other at the southeast corner. Six all-weather benches are located on the concrete pool deck. This current modern wading pool lies in the same location as the park’s original wading pool, constructed in the park prior to 1921, prior to when Dorothy M. Gray was engaged as the park’s landscape architect. A 2010 Master Plan Update of the park suggests that a 1972 Master Plan indicated the original circular wading pool and pool house still existed in 1972. Since then, the original wading pool facility was removed and the

¹¹ Mike Ferguson, “State-of-the-Art Playground Opens at Pioneer Park,” *The Billings Gazette*, 7 August 2015.

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existing wading pool and restrooms built by the City of Billings.¹² This structure is a noncontributing resource due to the complete reconstruction of the original wading pool (National Register Photos #26-27).

Resource #6 (Restrooms, one noncontributing building)

The restrooms, constructed in the early 1990s, are a 652-square-foot square concrete masonry unit structure located off 3rd Street West. The one-story building has a moderately pitched side-gabled metal roof and concrete block walls cornered with quoining details. Inside, it features six stalls and a mechanical room.

The front (east) elevation has a front-facing gable with wide overhanging eaves and a metal roof with opaque tiles in the gable. This elevation contains two bathroom doors on opposite corners of the building. Between the doors is a shallow projection with twin metal retractable doors to conceal vending machines. The northern elevation features close eaves and a concrete block wall sporting two separate artistic mosaics. The rear, western elevation, displays a concrete block wall with a close eave gable roof. It holds a door centered in the gable with a vent above, flanked by two distinct separate mosaics and two water fountains. The south elevation features the close eaves of the roof, a concrete block wall displaying two distinct separate mosaics, and two metal vents located just below the mosaics. This building is a noncontributing resource due to its recent age (National Register Photos #28-29).

Resource #7 (Southern Tennis Courts, one contributing structure)

This historic resource is a set of six north-south aligned tennis courts with a perimeter chain-link fence located off 3rd Street West near the southeast corner of Pioneer Park. These courts measure (fence to fence) 240 feet north-south by 175 feet east-west and are one of the oldest features of the park, built sometime before 1920 (Reference Additional Documentation #1).¹³ Like the northern tennis courts, these courts were upgraded in the 1970s to an asphalt surface. Despite upgrading, the southern tennis courts are a contributing resource as they retain strong integrity of location, setting, association, feeling, and design. The courts continue to serve in the same capacity they did historically (National Register Photos #30-32).

Resource #8 (Park Storage Facility, one contributing building)

This rectangular building displays clapboard siding and sits on a concrete block foundation. It is located off 3rd Street West on the southeast corner of Pioneer Park. The building is side gabled and one story tall. The front, northern elevation, has two covered windows flanking each side of a centered person door. The low-pitched roof topped with asphalt shingles displays open eaves and exposed rafters. The back (southern elevation) of the building holds double utility doors set west of three staggered covered window openings. The gabled western and eastern elevations both feature clapboard siding and two covered staggered window openings. This building

¹² The Land Group, Inc., *Pioneer Park Master Plan Update 2010*, 22,41.

¹³ The Land Group, Inc., *Pioneer Park Master Plan Update 2010*, 45-51.

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contributes to the district as it retains integrity of location, association, feeling, setting, workmanship, design, and materials (National Register Photos #37-40).

Resource #9 (Baseball Field, one noncontributing structure)

This resource is a baseball field located on the southern side of Pioneer Park. The chain-link backstop of the baseball diamond constructed in the late 1980s has fallen into disrepair. What appears to be a ball diamond is clearly visible on a 1969 aerial photograph of the park; however, the present configuration of the ballpark represented by a large cleared dirt area with a chain-link backstop significantly differs from the 1969 iteration. The present presentation of the ballfield occurred in the late 1980s. This structure is a noncontributing resource due to its lack of integrity; the present configuration is completely different from the ball diamond visible in the 1969 aerial photograph (National Register Photo #43).

Resource #10 (Horseshoe Pits, one contributing structure)

Four horseshoe pits are in the southeast corner of Pioneer Park, south of the southern tennis courts. Of the four green-painted horseshoe backstops, three appear to be original, constructed of wood planks secured to metal piping. The fourth backstop has been updated due to required maintenance and is constructed of composite plastic faux-wood planks secured to the original metal pipes. Although an exact date for the horseshoe pits remains unknown, aerial images from 1926, 1937, 1940, and 1946 clearly show some type of lateral feature occupying the area that presently hosts the pits. These early images suggest that the area between the backstops of the pits may have contained sand, not lawn. The images strongly suggest the horseshoe pits retain their historic association with the park and are counted as a contributing resource to the district as they retain integrity of location, association, feeling, setting, design and to a lesser degree, workmanship, and materials (National Register Photo #33).

Resource #11 (Disc Golf Walking Bridge, one noncontributing structure)

This resource consists of a green-painted metal pedestrian bridge located in the northwest corner of Pioneer Park crossing Crooked Creek. The location of the bridge suggests its installation occurred from the need to cross the creek by disc golf traffic. The walking bridge connects a path along the park's disc golf course saving players the need to cross the creek from hole to hole. The pedestrian bridge appears to date to the 1990s. This structure is a noncontributing resource to the district due to its recent age of construction (National Register Photo #50).

Resource #12 (ca. 1970s Bridge, one contributing structure)

Resource #12 consists of a cream-painted metal and wood plank pedestrian bridge centrally located in Pioneer Park crossing Crooked Creek. The bridge is believed to date to the 1970s and was likely constructed to connect the playground area to the other areas of the park across the creek. Master plan recommendations from 1976 call out the bridge near the playground. Unlike Resource #11, this bridge is built into the sidewalk path and features wooden treads. The bridge's rails are slightly arched with two horizontal wood bands across the rails. The bridge contributes to the district as it retains integrity of location, association, feeling, setting, workmanship, design, and materials (Reference Photo #49).

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Integrity

Pioneer Park retains excellent integrity of location, setting, feeling and association, and good integrity of design, materials, and workmanship allowing Pioneer Park to continue to evoke many of its original basic design characteristics. The planning in the early stages of the park's history, including the city's acquisition of a large amount of property, enabled landscape architect Dorothy M. Gray to conceive and begin initial development of different areas of the property that display many signature elements of the park's original design and reflect historic park design of the time. Some of her suggestions came to fruition several years later due to early money constraints. Gray retained and blended several preexisting resources into the landscape including a wading pool and six tennis courts. Her push for significantly increasing the number of trees and natural picnic areas and open space in the park is quite evident today. Some resources, such as the wading pool and a location for a pioneer memorial remain, albeit in reduced or replaced fashion, though still imparting some degree of her original concept. As with nearly all parks that display any degree of age, Pioneer Park reflects later improvements, such as the WPA tennis courts and stone retaining wall, which both retain sound integrity. More recent alterations or additions to the park represent the evolution of the landscape with changes directed to improving the usage of the area toward activities important at the present time. Although Pioneer Park lost acreage due to the construction of Billings Senior High School, Daylis Stadium, and nearby residences, the remaining core area and vast majority of the original park property remains, though the loss of the World War I memorial walkway bordered by 52 Chinese Elms was a great loss. The park-like design entwined with the natural beauty of the area results in a location that is just as vibrant and stunning today as it was when originally conceived.

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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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1918-1970

Significant Dates

1918: City of Billings Purchases Land for Pioneer Park
1921: Dorothy M. Gray Hired as Landscape Architect
1926: Park is Annexed by City of Billings
1932: Park Dedication
1936-1937: WPA Construction
1937: BBWA Levee Break

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Landscape Architect: Dorothy M. (Gray) Johnson
City of Billings, Department of Parks, Recreation, & Public Lands
WPA Construction

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Pioneer Park is locally significant under criteria A and C for the areas of Community Planning and Development, Entertainment/Recreation, and Landscape Architecture. Under Criterion A, Pioneer Park represents an early attempt by the City of Billings to provide its citizens a venue for outdoor recreation and leisure. Early city fathers realized one way to appeal to people moving west was to promote Billings' quality of life. A major vehicle toward this quality of life was, and continues to be, town parks. Not content to merely purchase of piece of land and call it a park, the city contracted with landscape architect Dorothy M. Gray to design a space that appealed to the burgeoning citizenry of Billings. Her plans incorporated many facets, including areas to relax and enjoy the outdoors in a more natural state, and areas for recreation. While not all of Gray's original ideas came to fruition at the time, those that did continue to provide park visitors much the same experience of outdoor enjoyment as the early recreationist of Billings.

Pioneer Park is locally significant under Criterion C with respect to Landscape Architecture. The design of Pioneer Park reflects the influence of the American Parks Movement, the City Beautiful Movement, and general picturesque landscaping principles developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Landscape architect Dorothy M. Gray's original plans for the park have not been located, however, the characteristics of the park make clear her overall vision of a large area in which to beautify the city and facilitate local recreation. Initial development of the park began in the early twentieth century, and since that time the park has served as an important recreational, social, and ceremonial gathering place for residents of Billings. Today, the park serves to enhance the character of the surrounding residential neighborhoods that developed around the park in northwestern Billings in the 1920s. The park incorporates both designed and natural areas, as well as manmade amenities and buildings. Pioneer Park currently provides public engagement opportunities including tennis courts, a ballfield, a wading pool, a playground, various paths, picnic areas, and open spaces. The park is historically associated with the memorialization of the pioneers who settled in eastern Montana and founded the City of Billings, both a bronze tablet and a stone memorial are erected in their honor within the park.

The history of the park extends from the early-twentieth century when parks were pleasure grounds, to recreation and ceremonial grounds, to the city's most heavily used park in the twenty-first century. The period of significance begins in 1918, when the City of Billings purchased the land for Pioneer Park, and ends in 1970, the 50-year cut-off date and end of the historical period.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

HISTORIC CONTEXT

Billings, MT

In 1877, settlers established the first town of the Yellowstone Valley along the Yellowstone River. Named Coulson, the town lay just east of present-day Billings. Coulson served as a trading location for many years until the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1881. The arrival of the railroad launched a new period of immigration to the area, and much to the chagrin of Coulson, a location a few miles to the west where the town of Billings was established. For a brief time, the towns co-existed, but over time the residents of Coulson moved to the new booming town of Billings and Coulson faded away.¹⁴

Named after Northern Pacific Railway president Frederick H. Billings, Billings was officially founded in 1882 to serve as the railroad's western railhead for their westward expansion. The early pioneers that came to Billings, many by the railroad, came from a variety of backgrounds. The town that initially began with only three buildings, soon exploded within months to over two thousand buildings. This incredible growth earned Billings the sobriquet of "The Magic City," because like magic, the town seemed to appear overnight.¹⁵

Billings continued to grow and prosper with arrival of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad in 1894 and the Great Northern Railway's line from Great Falls in 1908. The Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 further attracted thousands of dry land farmers to south central and eastern Montana from 1909 to 1918. The immigration propelled the economy of both Billings and the surrounding area, which gained an additional economic boost with the establishment of the Great Western Sugar refinery.¹⁶

The collapse of the Homestead Boom resulting from drought and the ensuing economic depression during the early 1920s took its toll on Billings; however, the town's prominence as a transportation hub on the northern Great Plains ensured its long-term success. Billings witnessed a fifty percent increase in population from 1910 to 1920, but the depression curbed growth over the next ten years to just over 1,000 people.¹⁷ Despite the deceleration in growth, Billings saw

¹⁴ Carroll Van West, *Capitalism on the Frontier, Billings & the Yellowstone Valley in the 19th Century*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 120-121.

¹⁵ Myrtle E Cooper, *From Tent Town to City: A Chronological History of Billings, Montana 1882-1935* (Billings: Parnly Billings Library, 1982), 13-20.

¹⁶ Don Spritzer, *Roadside History of Montana*, (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing, 1999), 359, 368; Myrtle E. Cooper, *From Tent Town to City: A Chronological History of Billings, Montana, 1882-1935*, (Billings: Parnly Billings Library, 1982), 29, 42; Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, revised ed., (Seattle: University of Washington, 1991), 238.

¹⁷ United States Federal Census, 1910, 1920, 1930; R. L. Polk, *Billings City Directory*, 1923, available at Billings Public Library, Billings, MT.

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the construction of two new hospitals, St. Vincent's in 1923 and Billings Deaconess in 1927, and the opening of Billings Municipal Airport in 1928. Tourism, visitation, and local travel also accelerated with the appearance of the automobile.¹⁸ The long-term economic success of Billings along with the ease of travelling around the city made leisure activities, such as enjoyment of parks, important to the citizenry.

The arrival of the Great Depression forced Billings into the ranks of cities across the nation dealing with the momentous economic downturn. However, in 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs, such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA), brought some relief. The WPA undertook projects associated with roads, bridges, and parks, including Pioneer Park in Billings.

With the entrance of the United States into World War II, Billings benefited in its position as the transportation hub and trade center of the region because of the increased demand and production of agricultural and petroleum products.

From 1940 to 1950 the population of Billings grew over 30 percent from 23,261 people to 31,724 people reflecting the post-World War II economic boom. By the early 1950s, Billings role as an economic hub further evolved as it assumed the mantle of oil and gas capital of the region. Per capita and family annual average income in the Billings trade area sat above the national average. The oil boom stimulated the additional growth of the area including the growth of the medical facilities and expansion of Logan International Airport. By 1957, Billings boasted a population of 65,000.¹⁹ During the 1970s, Billings growth in the downtown area included the construction of the first high-rise built in Montana. Some of this growth resulted partially from the 1973 OPEC Oil Embargo that boosted oil development in eastern Montana, and with it, Billings becoming the headquarters for many energy companies. The completion of large portions of the interstate highway system in Montana during the 1970s also raised Billings' profile as a regional shopping destination, again strengthening its position as Montana's largest metro area.

A New Designed Park for Billings

Early city founders emphasized and incorporated city parks in an effort to add to the new community's quality of life.²⁰ In 1918, the city purchased 35 acres northwest of Billings that

¹⁸ Cooper, *From Tent Town to City*, 61, 65, 66; Sue Hart, *Billings Montana's Trailhead*, (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Press, 2009), 52.

¹⁹ Spritzer, *Roadside History of Montana*, 359; Karen D. Stevens and Dee Ann Redman, *Billings A to Z*, (Billings: Friends of the Library, 2000), 88, 92; Anneke-Jan Boden, *Billings: The First 100 Years*, (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Press, 1982), 139-140; "Montana, Its Growing Says the Census," *Montana Treasure Magazine*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (August 1950), 2; "Billings, The Magic City," *Montana Treasure Magazine*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (August 1950), 6; Hart, *Billings Montana's Trailhead*, 79-80, 82; "Dynamic Billings: New Oil Center of the Northwest," *Out West Magazine*, Vol. 15, No. 7 (August 1954), 16-17, 22-23.

²⁰ Elisabeth DeGrenier, *Community Historian*, interview by Nicholas C. Powell, July 21, 2017.

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would become Pioneer Park from local rancher Henry C. McKinsey.²¹ The mayor at the time, W. Lee Mains, proposed naming the park to honor a prominent Billings pioneer, though it was difficult to pick just one individual as so many pioneers contributed to the city's early history. The name Pioneer Park was suggested as a way to commemorate all of the city's early settlers.²²

In 1921, the City of Billings chose and contracted Dorothy M. Gray (later known as Mrs. Dorothy M. Johnson) to design Pioneer Park. Thankfully, the city fathers had the foresight to commission a landscape architect to design the park for the city of Billings, not necessarily a given in the early decades of the twentieth century. In the early twentieth century, it was rare to find a landscape architect in the western United States. Even more rare was finding a professionally trained woman landscape architect. Most landscape architects lived in the east or larger urban cities. Gray, a resident of Billings, just returned from school at Cornell University where she pursued her education in landscape architecture, thus holding strong credentials for the design of the new park.

Gray's original design included and incorporated the existing wading pool (located in the same location as the current wading pool) and the six southern tennis courts (located in the same location as the current tennis courts) as well as new features she conceived to memorialize the pioneers. Near the main entrance, which faces Avenue E, she planned a large oval flower bed featuring a "pioneer statue" (located on the western end), an arched rim rock stone seat, and an arc of evergreens. Gray proposed damming Crooked Creek to create a lake around the mid-point of the creek. Gray envisioned natural picnic areas located in the western and northern open spaces of the park, which featured tables, benches, open-air stoves, as well as some picnic shelters. Today, various metal picnic tables are located in the northeastern part of the park near the northern tennis courts. A "natural open-air theater" proposed for the northeastern space of the park was also never constructed, though Open Space 3 (described in Section 7 above) today serves as just such a venue for community events as the gradual sloping hillside sloping to the north functions for spectator seating for the community during events.

Gray's original plans also included a large log cabin constructed in the "true pioneer style," located near Avenue G and used for a museum and meeting space. A proposed caretaker's cabin, located east of the museum, featured a similar style. Neither the museum nor the caretaker's cabin ever came to fruition. Additional proposed features never constructed include an open-air swimming pool with bath houses planned opposite the wading pool on the south section of the property and a curved pergola on the north section of the property. While the initial construction of the park moved forward, along with the straightening of Crooked Creek and planting of a considerable number of trees after the approval of Gray's design, other improvements were put on hold due to a lack of funding. Construction commenced again in 1932 after the dedication ceremony of Pioneer Park to the pioneers.

²¹ "CITY PIONEER DIES AT RANCH – Henry C. McKinsey, 72, Once Owned Pioneer Park Site," *The Billings Gazette*, 27 June 1928.

²² The Land Group, Inc., *Pioneer Park Master Plan 2010*, 17-18 (Cooper 1982).

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Other improvements proposed included a “pond cultural station” (apparently never built), a forty-foot raised wooden toboggan slide scaffold constructed in 1924 (nonextant), and a “Memorial Walk,” established by the Daughters of the American Revolution to honor local veterans who died during World War I. The pond cultural station was proposed in October 1923 by C.F. Culler, a district supervisor, following an inspection of Pioneer Park. Mr. Culler stated that after a thorough inspection, the park would prove the ideal site for a small first-class station.²³ The following March, of 1924, H.C. Crippen proposed the installation of a fish hatchery plant, indicating the prospect met approval by the state fish and game commission in Helena. The proposed fish hatchery plant was to be located in the northwestern part of the park and consist of a series of ponds and necessary buildings.²⁴ Although no final plan was decided on by 1924, the estimated cost of the project was \$10,000.

In 1926, the Shining Mountain chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) completed plans for planting 52 memorial trees in Pioneer Park honoring the veterans of Billings who died in World War I. The design featured a walkway bordered by a double row of Chinese Elms with a bronze tablet located at the foot of each tree bearing the name of a fallen soldier.²⁵ Later in the early 1930s, an addition was made to the war memorial. The D.A.R. chapter of Billings erected a stone entrance from Grand Avenue at the beginning of the memorial walk. The stone for the entrance was quarried and donated by the Billings Polytechnic Institute. The wall itself, constructed on each side of the entrance, featured a pier at the end of a semi-circular wall with a D.A.R. dedication plaque.²⁶ All that remains of the memorial walk today are the pair of stone piers located on the campus of the adjacent Billings Senior High School, erected in 1939, outside of the Pioneer Park property.

On May 18, 1926, the City of Billings and the city council approved the annexation of Pioneer Park into the city proper. Although the city owned the park itself, the annexation was necessary to bring the property within the geographic jurisdiction of the city so the park could receive more effective administration and better policing.²⁷ Additionally, in 1926, the city engineer, E.M. Sneckenberger, created plans to straighten Crooked Creek.²⁸ It is not clear why changes to the creek were designed, but it likely related to a proposal to accommodate a swimming pool as well as allowing for other improvements to the park.

²³ The Land Group Inc., *Pioneer Park Master Plan 2010*, 18-20.

²⁴ “FISH HATCHERY PROSPECT GOOD – Billings to Have \$10,000 Plant in Pioneer Park,” *The Billings Gazette*, 13 March 1924.

²⁵ “TREES HONOR SOLDIER DEAD – D.A.R. to Provide “Memorial Walk” in Pioneer Park,” *The Billings Gazette*, 28 April 1926.

²⁶ “WAR MEMORIAL ADDITION MADE – Stone Entrance Built by D.A.R. Chapter at Elm Walk,” *The Billings Gazette*, November 1931.

²⁷ “Pioneer Park Is Annexed by City,” *The Billings Gazette*, May 28, 1926.

²⁸ “CREEK IN PARK TO BE CHANGED – Adopt Engineer’s Plan for Improvements at Pioneer,” *The Billings Gazette*, 11 November 1926.

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In 1929, Pioneer Park lost acreage when the Billings school board approved the purchase of some of the park land on the south off Grand Avenue for use as an athletic field (Refer to Additional Documentation-Aerial Maps).²⁹ Dedication occurred the following fall preceding a Great Falls-Billings football game.³⁰

The City of Billings celebrated its semi-centennial in 1932 to much fanfare and excitement; a large ceremonial celebration was held at Pioneer Park for the occasion (Refer to Additional Documentation-Historic Images #6). During the event, a bronze tablet was unveiled commemorating the dedication of the park to the pioneers who founded the city.³¹ The crowd of people attending the celebration varied from eastern Montana and Billings pioneers, local dignitaries, traditionally dressed Native Americans and various community members, set to the soundtrack of the municipal band. Mrs. L.L. Lamport who arrived in Billings in 1882 and Miss Mary Vaughan, granddaughter of J.W. Vaughan, pioneer of 1879, helped unveil the bronze memorial. A group of national guardsmen encircled the tablet during the unveiling and an airplane flew over and dropped a wreath of flowers for placement on the bronze memorial. Several speakers gave addresses during the event, including former Billings mayor W.V. Beers who remarked, "It is fitting that we meet here to extend to the old timers and pioneers our greeting and to acknowledge our debt of gratitude to them. It is fitting that we congratulate the pioneers who laid the foundations of this community. It is also pleasant to remember the foresight of the founders in setting aside ground for parks and playgrounds... and we and now meet in this beautiful park... which bears the name of Pioneer Park."³² To this day, this bronze tablet still sits in its original location across from Avenue E on the eastern side of Pioneer Park (National Register Photos #19-20).

The Great Depression brought further changes to Pioneer Park with the arrival of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Created on May 6, 1935, the WPA stands as the most diverse of the New Deal public works programs created to assuage mass unemployment. A three-tier process was involved to acquire WPA assistance. Beginning at the local level, city and county governments assessed needs and unemployment numbers with proposals sent to the WPA state office for vetting before forwarding to the Washington D.C. headquarters for president approval.³³ Projects that fell under the umbrella of the WPA included bridges, schools, airports and importantly for Billings, parks. Pioneer Park wasn't alone in its attention by the WPA as 8000 parks were either constructed or saw improvements by the organization.³⁴

²⁹ "SCHOOL FINANCES BEST IN YEARS, TRUSTEES ARE TOLD - Athletic Field," *The Billings Gazette*, 20 March 1929.

³⁰ "SCHOOL PARK DEDICATION DATE IS SET - Ceremonies Will Be Held on November 2 Before Great Falls and Billings Game," *The Billings Gazette*, 22 October 1929.

³¹ "CITY BIDS ALL PIONEERS TO ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM," *The Billings Gazette*, 10 July 1932.

³² The Land Group, Inc., *Pioneer Park Master Plan Update 2010*, 20-21.

³³ The Living New Deal, Works Progress Administration (WPA) (1935), found at <https://livingnewdeal.org/glossary/works-progress-administration-wpa-1935/>, accessed August 5, 2020.

³⁴ Federal Works Agency, *Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-43*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), 134-136.

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During their time in Billings, the WPA constructed three tennis courts and an associated retaining wall (still extant on the property), and three lily ponds located adjacent to the creek in Pioneer Park. The lily ponds were stocked with fish and lily pads and lined with planted cedars, black birch, and trailing juniper around the edges. The ponds project was completed in 1936 after three months at a cost of \$3,537.

Unfortunately, the ponds and all the hard work that went into their construction wasn't long for the world. On June 11, 1937, the city of Billings was devastated by a flood. Following an incredibly dry spring, a heavy June downpour drenched Billings and the surrounding areas. In less than two hours, the early summer sudden storm dumped significant rain and hail into the Yellowstone Valley causing water and boulders to cascade down from the rimrocks surrounding the city, and into Billings' normally dormant creek beds.³⁵ Canyon and Alkali creek's generally dry beds turned into raging torrents with water pouring southeast towards the city knocking out bridges and rail lines and temporarily cutting off the city from the outside. The worst devastation occurred at 11 p.m. on June 11th when the flood waters hit the main canal of the Billings Bench Water Association (BBWA) ditch and broke the levee above the Hilands Golf Club. Once the BBWA levee broke, the flood waters quickly poured down and tore through Pioneer Park, fanning out and submerging the surrounding northwestern residential area of Billings under knee-high flood waters. The flood waters traveled through Pioneer Park, completely destroying the lily ponds recently installed by the WPA in 1936, and washing them, along with many other park resources, down onto Grand Avenue completely covering the street in mounds of dirt and other debris. The flood waters continued their way into the city of Billings and caused further damage to the downtown area.³⁶ The waters could still be seen raging through Pioneer Park the day after the flood (Reference Additional Documentation-Historic Images #7).³⁷ Following the flooding, no repairs or other work were done to rehabilitate this area of the park to its pre-disaster condition. The flooding resulted to a great degree in the present appearance of this area as no work was conducted to rebuild the ponds. Instead this area features the natural growth of willows and cottonwoods.

Apparently, the completion of the northern tennis courts by the WPA wasn't above reproach. Although important in terms of employment and completing projects, Pioneer Park officials criticized the work conducted by the WPA when they discovered that many of the workers lacked proper training for some of their assignments, including the construction of the three northern tennis courts. The lack of training appears to have resulted in failure to complete the courts on time for the scheduled Montana State Tennis Association's state tournament, despite

³⁵ Donna Healy, "The Flood of '37: Billings' Worst Natural Disaster Inundated Homes, Businesses," *The Billings Gazette*, 5 June 2004.

³⁶ An aerial survey later determined that the flooding encompassed a roughly 3-mile long by three-quarters of a mile-wide area. Reports stated the flood waters crested at 18 ½ inches in some places with damages totaling at about two million dollars.

³⁷ Bob Fears, *Pioneer Park Creek June 1937 Flood*, June 1937. Photograph housed at the Western Heritage Center, Billings, MT.

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the appropriation of \$16,222 to do so.³⁸ At the same time as the northern tennis court construction, the WPA also built the striking retaining wall that still graces three sides of the courts. In addition to building the three new northern courts and retaining wall, the WPA workers leveled and resurfaced one of the six previously constructed courts south of the wading pool.

Pioneer Park lost further acreage in 1939 with the construction of Billings Senior High School on the south portion of the park, followed by the adjacent Daylis Stadium, reducing the park's size from 35 to 32.5 acres. In the 1930s and 1940s, advertisements for nearby properties and houses boasted of their location adjacent to Pioneer Park with its abundance of flora. The area north of the park continued to be developed until after the 1940s. In an effort to provide better fire protection to an ever-expanding residential district at the western edge of the city, the City of Billings constructed a municipal fire station (Zimmerman Center) within the western side of the park off Virginia Lane for approximately \$20,000 in 1948. Other proposals for the park were floated at the time but never gained traction, such as one in 1949 to construct a road through the park to increase access.³⁹

By the 1960s, additional acreage was lost when several apartment residences were developed immediately north of Billings Senior High School and south of the fire station (Zimmerman Center) [Refer to Additional Documentation-Aerial Maps].

In 1972, local landscape architectural firm Theodore J. Worth and Associates created a master plan for Pioneer Park. The 1972 plan included improvements such as a parking lot and adjacent picnic shelter (located in the southeast section of the park), a playground, a basketball court, interconnecting pathways throughout the park, and a roadway to join park areas with parking lots. Additionally, the plan showed a proposed widening of the creek around its midpoint. The 1972 plan included the original circular wading pool and pool house that had been used for decades; however, around that same time, the City of Billings removed the original wading pool and replaced it with the current wading pool and restrooms (National Register Photos #26-29). The 1972 plan included many improvements to make the area more user-friendly, but many were never implemented including the construction of the basketball court, parking lot/picnic shelter, proposed creek widening, and construction of many of the pathways.⁴⁰

While Pioneer Park has evolved throughout its more than eighty-year lifespan, it continues to serve its original recreational purpose. Because many improvements proposed over the park's existence never came to fruition, the park in many ways continues to evoke the same feel as during its early history. Currently, the park hosts special events including Symphony in the Park, Saturday Live, and the Montana State Games. The open-air theater, conceived by Dorothy M.

³⁸ "WPA Observes First Birthday in Yellowstone County – Aides Estimate Program Cost \$1,000,000 in Area," *The Billings Gazette*, 4 October 1936.

³⁹ "Some of the Reasons Why You Should Vote for Tom T. Rowe For Mayor," *The Herald* (Billings, MT), 31 March 1949.

⁴⁰ The Land Group Inc., *Pioneer Park Master Plan Update 2010*, 22.

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Gray, though implemented later, is a proven success, as these events draw thousands of inhabitants to the park and foster a sense of community in Billings. Today, the park continues to be touted as Billings' own "Central Park" and is the city's most heavily used developed park. It will be a treasured resource to the people of Billings for many years to come.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

American Parks and City Beautiful Movements

Contracted to fulfill the need for a city park and recognizing the need for recreation space, landscape architect Dorothy M. Gray envisioned a park for Billings, Montana that would stand as the embodiment of a recreational landscape to help promote the beautification and the well-being of its inhabitants. The park exemplifies influences from the Pleasure Ground park period of the late nineteenth century through its natural landscape, while also incorporating elements for recreation when it was first developed. Pioneer Park's maturation during the early twentieth century and into the mid-century resulted in the layout reflected today. It is comprised of fields, strolling areas, picnic areas, a wooded creek area, recreation facilities, and memorials. Although the full extent of Gray's vision never fully materialized due to funding shortfalls, the park evolved through the years with the city's recreational and ceremonial needs always at the forefront. Gray's park developed through local community involvement combined with natural occurrences. Today, Pioneer Park reflects attention to planning, architectural components, and amenities for both passive and active recreational pursuits. By fulfilling the many needs and wants of the city and community, Pioneer Park has earned the affectionate moniker of Billings' "Central Park."

The American Parks and City Beautiful Movements, which had their origins in the mid-nineteenth century landscape designs of famed landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead, developed as a reaction to urban industrialization. They aimed to provide environments for city dwellers to pursue recreation and other social activities. Parks and nature areas quickly became an early form of urban refuge in the City Beautiful movement.⁴¹

The history of urban parks can be quantified into four models, with the two earliest being represented in Pioneer Park. Each are associated with a distinct era and characteristics. The four urban parks models and their approximate years of significance are: the Pleasure Ground (1850-1900), the Reform Park (1900-1930), the Recreation Facility (1930-1965), and the Open-Space System (1965-Present).⁴² Central Park, designed by Olmstead in 1858 for New York City, is the epitome of a Pleasure Ground, characterized partly by its meandering, wooded walkways. The Pleasure Ground was a large landscaped park designed to simulate a countryside or nature but not be as wild. This Pleasure Ground-type park was conceptualized to be a mid-way point

⁴¹ Galen Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America* (Cambridge: the MIT Press, 1989), 84.

⁴² Galen Cranz, "Changing Roles of Urban Parks: From Pleasure Garden to Open Space" 1 June 2000. *The Urbanist*, found at <https://www.spur.org/publications/urbanist-article/2000-06-01/changing-roles-urban-parks>, accessed July 22, 2020.

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between the finite civilized nature of a city and the wilderness of pure nature.⁴³ Through the creation of a park with these things in mind, it allowed visitors to gain a mental appreciation of the landscape, referred to as a “passive” component to interaction with the landscape. These parks were often located on the edges of cities. Influences from the era-appropriate Pleasure Ground model can be seen in Dorothy M. Gray’s conceptual designs for Pioneer Park, where the western and northern areas of the park were left as natural as possible in order to simulate the wilderness that the pioneers of Billings would have encountered. Gray hoped this natural area of the park would be used for picnicking, an example of a passive activity for enjoying the park space.⁴⁴

The Reform Park model, 1900-1930, was a progressive change from its predecessor as the main approach to these parks was to organize activity and engagement. During this time, many urban park planners believed people incapable of undertaking their own recreation, thus organized activities became a main design goal versus the unstructured passive pursuits of the Pleasure Ground. Presiding landscape architects like Olmstead gave way to Reform Park organizers, play directors, and experts in recreation. As a result of labor reform in the early 1900s, many individuals had shorter work weeks, larger incomes, longer vacations, and earlier retirements which allowed for the new construct of leisure time. Through these social reforms the idea of planning and scheduling time for organized activities led to the development of Reform Parks. Many of these new parks now included municipal facilities like stadiums, golf courses, tennis courts, and picnic areas, whereas Pleasure Ground parks featured few of these resources. It was during this time that the southern tennis courts at Pioneer Park were built for organized recreation; these courts are visible in park photographs from 1926 (Reference Additional Documentation-Historic Images #1).⁴⁵ Just as Pleasure Grounds were the solution for lack of urban free space in the nineteenth century, Reform Parks now were the moral defense and solution for the perceived new social threat of an abundance of free time. To reform park developers, organized activities for idle time was a preferred alternative to that same time easily spent in a saloon or dance hall.

Although both intended to imitate nature, unlike the Pleasure Ground, the Reform Park was not curtailed by nightfall or the rough adverse weather of the changing seasons. In contrast, the main focus of these new reform parks included using the park during times it would have previously been unused for organized activities. The rationale for exclusively summer programming during warmer months in Pleasure Grounds eroded, and year-round recreation increased in Reform Parks across the country, especially with the rise in popularity of winter sports. In many reform parks, ice-skating and sledding now competed with out-of-season golfing and tennis.⁴⁶ This development of year-round recreation and rise in popularity of winter sports is also evident in

⁴³ Galen Cranz, “Urban Parks of the Past and Future,” 1 January 2009. *Project for Public Spaces*, <https://www.pps.org/article/futureparks>, accessed July 13, 2020.

⁴⁴ The Land Group, Inc., *Pioneer Park Master Plan Update 2010*, 18.

⁴⁵ Alfred Baumgartner, *Elevation to SE*. 1926. Western Heritage Center, Billings, MT.

⁴⁶ Galen Cranz, *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America* (Cambridge: the MIT Press, 1989), 62-69

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Pioneer Park's history. In 1924, the city of Billings erected a toboggan slide in the northeast corner of Pioneer Park. Its construction began with a forty-foot raised wooden scaffold that lead down to a ditch that ran two blocks down the hill and turned inward toward the park. The ditch, then filled with water, froze into a slick track. An article in *The Billings Gazette* on January 28, 1924 notes the increase in winter sport participation with the headline: "WINTER SPORTS PROVE POPULAR WITH ALL AGES AT CITY RINKS – Hundreds With Skates Throng Ice on Brisk Evenings; Toboggan Slide at Pioneer Park Is Also Much Frequented."⁴⁷ Like many other Reform Parks of the era, Pioneer Park exemplified year-round organized recreational activities with its tennis courts, wading pool, and sledding, in addition to its toboggan slide. In Pioneer Park, the culmination of both park styles with their unique characteristics create an interesting hybrid park, designed over time as both an example of a Pleasure Ground and a Reform Park.

Many of the elements in Pioneer Park also reflect ideas prominent in the City Beautiful Movement, which has its origins in the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago. The movement, reformist at heart, sought to introduce civic beauty to American cities through architectural and landscape projects and inclusive planning practices. The 1893 exposition grounds, adorned with broad avenues, monumental-sized Neoclassical buildings, and large water features, served as an inspiration for city planners and those interested in the beautification of their municipal landscapes. The movement was also associated with social reform, which promoted urban and park planning as a way to improve the lives of city residents.⁴⁸ Gray's designs drew from the theories of the City Beautiful Movement in several ways: broad vistas across the park and the beautification of the landscape to promote a better civic life. Gray herself was an advocate and passionate proponent for the beautification of Billings through landscape architecture, and her designs for Pioneer Park convey just that.

Landscape Architecture

Landscape architecture's complex history is one shared in the larger history of landscape gardening and architecture. Not until relatively recently did terms like "landscape architecture" or "landscape architect" become commonly used. Early reference to the term "landscape architecture" is found in Gilbert Laing Meason's 1928 book, *On The Landscape Architecture of the Great Painters of Italy*. Meason, born in Scotland, had not visited Italy but greatly admired the relationships between architecture and landscaping seen in the great landscape paintings of the time drawing a relationship between built form and natural form. The term was then used by John Claudius Loudon, a Scottish garden designer, to describe a specific type of architecture suited for placement in designed landscapes. Loudon was later referenced for his use of the term, "landscape architecture," in American designer Andrew Jackson Downing's book, *A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening, Adapted to North America* in

⁴⁷ "WINTER SPORTS PROVE POPULAR WITH ALL AGES AT CITY RINKS – Hundreds With Skates Throng Ice on Brisk Evenings; Toboggan Slide at Pioneer Park Is Also Much Frequented," *The Billings Gazette*, 28 January 1924.

⁴⁸ Galen Cranz, "Changing Roles of Urban Parks: From Pleasure Garden to Open Space." 1 June 2000. *The Urbanist*, found at <https://www.spur.org/publications/urbanist-article/2000-06-01/changing-roles-urban-parks>, accessed July 25, 2020.

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1841. This eventually led to the adoption of the term by Frederick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux. Olmstead provided the term a different meaning, using it to describe the professional task of designing a composition of landforms, water, planting, paving, and other various structures. Olmstead's first use of this term occurred in his winning design entry for Central Park in New York City.⁴⁹ Olmstead and Vaux adopted "landscape architect" as their professional titles and used it to describe their work while planning urban park systems. Beyond Olmstead and Vaux, use of the term as a professional title did not become widely used until Olmstead completed the Emerald Necklace in Boston to the wide admiration of others internationally.

Dorothy M. Gray, Landscape Architect

Dorothy M. Gray was born in Detroit, Michigan on November 26, 1896 to parents Macomb Byron and Frances Louise (née Millen) Gray.⁵⁰ Gray's family eventually moved to Billings, Montana in 1910 where Dorothy's father sold seeds wholesale. Gray remained in Billings until relocating to Ithaca, New York to attend Cornell University where she specialized in landscape gardening.⁵¹ After graduating from Cornell, Gray returned home to Billings. In 1921, at the age of 25, while working at the landscaping firm of Gray & Gray with her father,⁵² Gray was contracted by the Billings Park Board to draw plans for a 35-acre park, later known as Pioneer Park. This no doubt would have been somewhat unique at the time as most landscape architects worked out east or in much bigger urban cities like Chicago or New York. Dorothy, just returned to Billings from school where she received her education in landscape architecture, was likely the city's clear and convenient choice to design Pioneer Park. Through her contract with the city, Gray aspired to achieve the goal of Billings' beautification and improved livability through Pioneer Park.

Gray's strong beautification ethic was evident in published newspaper advertisements promoting beautification through gardens. One that appeared for National Garden Week in April 1923 advertised "Free Landscape Plans" and sketch drawings for front yards in hopes of beautifying home grounds in the City of Billings, furthering her advocacy for the City Beautiful Movement (Refer to Additional Documentation-Historic Images #12).⁵³ Through these publications in *The Billings Gazette*, she hoped to stimulate interest in beautifying natural grounds and ultimately the city itself.⁵⁴ Dorothy was also featured in editorial sections of *The Billings Gazette* for her expertise in gardening stating she was the "very most capable landscape architect in this city"

⁴⁹ William A. Mann, *Landscape Architecture: An Illustrated History in Timelines, Site Plans, and Biography*, (John Wiley & Sons, 1993), xiii

⁵⁰ *Montana, County Marriages, 1865-1950*. Salt Lake City, UT: FamilySearch, 2013.

⁵¹ "DEATH CLAIMS CLUBWOMAN AT HOSPITAL HERE - Mrs. Dorothy Gray Johnson Succumbs Following Recent Bladder Operation," *The Billings Gazette*, 11 December 1936.

⁵² The offices of Gray & Gray were located in the Babcock Theater Building in downtown Billings (listed in the National Register on April 9, 2013, NR # 13000153).

⁵³ "Attention! Free Landscape Plans During National Garden Week," *The Billings Gazette*, 22 April 1923.

⁵⁴ "Attention! Free Landscape Plans During National Garden Week," *The Billings Gazette*, 22 April 1923.

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and that her designs would lend enchantment to your home, increase the value of your property and “your grounds will win the admiration of the passers-by.”⁵⁵

In addition to her advocacy for the City Beautiful Movement through gardening and in her advertisements, Gray also wrote various papers about the topic and gave lectures and talks on city beautification. In 1924, at the Yellowstone County Federation of Women’s Clubs, Gray was part of the programming for the meeting and presented her paper, “*Beautifying Our Towns and Public Places*,” to attending delegates. Gray remarked, “In planting the grounds immediately surrounding the home, whether in city or country, certain cardinal principles of landscape gardening should be observed. All planting in front areas should be made with a view to softening the architectural lines of the house and making an attractive frame for it... If you women are really interested in the beautification of your city, town, or neighborhood, promote civic and garden clubs, advocate ‘clean-up days’ and ‘plant-a-tree days’ and get hold of all the garden magazines and books available from public libraries.”⁵⁶ Toward this goal, Gray sold flower bulbs and seeds during the mid-1920s from her business office at Gray & Gray and the Jewell Nursey.⁵⁷ In 1925, Gray lead another program for women’s clubs about the “Beautification of Home Yards.”⁵⁸ For Gray, designing Pioneer Park was only the beginning in her advocacy of the City Beautification Movement in Billings, and for years Gray served as a passionate proponent for city beautification and continued to advocate for landscape beautification throughout her life.

Gray married former cattle rancher John Carter Johnson at the age of 32 on December 29, 1928.⁵⁹ Prior to her marriage, Dorothy had been highly engaged within the Billings community as president and charter member of the Montana Business & Professional Women’s Club, charter member of the local chapter of the American Association of University Women, and president of the Billings Garden Club, while continuing her work with Gray & Gray.⁶⁰ On September 10, 1936, Gray gave birth to Frances Louise Johnson. Tragically, Gray died three months later, following complications from a gall bladder operation on December 9, 1936.⁶¹

⁵⁵ “Shopping in Billings With BETTY The Gazette Shopper – WHAT CAN LEND ENCHANTMENT,” *The Billings Gazette*, 23 March 1924; “Shopping in Billings With BETTY The Gazette Shopper – INCREASE THE VALUE OF YOUR PROPERTY,” *The Billings Gazette*, 16 March 1924.

⁵⁶ “Federation of Women’s Clubs Holds First Meeting at Acton – Delegates From Five Chapters In Attendance – Excellent Program Is Enjoyed and Much Business Done,” *The Billings Gazette*, 1 June 1924.

⁵⁷ “Dorothy Gray Johnson: Landscape Architect for Pioneer Park” Exhibit, Western Heritage Center, Billings, MT.

⁵⁸ “Beautification Of Home Yards Is Club Topic – Miss Dorothy Gray Is Leader of Program on Decoration,” *The Billings Gazette*, 15 March 1925.

⁵⁹ “Miss Dorothy Gray Becomes Bride of J. Carter Johnson,” *The Billings Gazette*, 30 December 1928.

⁶⁰ “SOCIETY – Club Meets Tuesday,” *The Billings Gazette*, 4 September 1927.

⁶¹ “DEATH CLAIMS CLUBWOMAN AT HOSPITAL HERE – Mrs. Dorothy Gray Johnson Succumbs Following Recent Bladder Operation,” *The Billings Gazette*, 11 December 1936.

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Pioneer Park today represents one of the largest parks in the City of Billings' parks and recreation system. The park, established in 1918 following World War I, exemplifies the tenets of early-twentieth century park design movements. Its development over the early and mid-twentieth century resulted in the layout reflected today comprising areas of athletic spaces, walking areas, picnic areas, scenic spaces, a wooded creek, and memorials to the pioneers of Billings. Pioneer Park's location and size has led to its status as Billings' "Central Park" and as the premier open space in the city.⁶²

⁶² Mike Ferguson, "Our Central Park': Pioneer Park Poised to Celebrate a Century of Popular Use," *The Billings Gazette* April 25, 2015.

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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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 32.5 acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 45.789883 | Longitude: -108.523154 |
| 2. Latitude: 45.786057 | Longitude: -108.523131 |
| 3. Latitude: 45.786074 | Longitude: -108.525960 |
| 4. Latitude: 45.787477 | Longitude: -108.525950 |
| 5. Latitude: 45.787500 | Longitude: -108.527814 |
| 6. Latitude: 45.789867 | Longitude: -108.527812 |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Pioneer Park is bounded to the north by Parkhill Drive and on the east by 3rd Street West. The southern boundary follows the east-west running property line demarcation that separates the park from Daylis Stadium and a portion of the grounds of Billings Senior High

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School to the south. The boundary then turns north and then west to its intersection with Virginia Lane to exclude a residential area. From this point, the boundary moves north parallel to Virginia Lane and its intersection with Parkhill Drive.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The historic boundary is drawn to encompass all the property currently held by the City of Billings, The Department of Parks, Recreation and Public Lands (PRPL) and designated by the City of Billings as Pioneer Park. See attached topographic and aerial maps, Section 9 pages 55 and 56; reference to these maps confirm this boundary.

The historic boundary encompasses the entirety of the 32.5 acreage associated with the park, all known historic resources, and the park's historic setting. The legal location of Pioneer Park is "Pioneer Park Addition, S32, T01N R26E Lot Park."

11. Form Prepared By

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date: July 2020

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

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- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Pioneer Park
City or Vicinity: Billings
County: Yellowstone County State: MT
Photographer: Nicholas C. Powell
Date Photographed: July and August 2020

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0001
View: Zimmerman Center, view looking north

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0002
View: Zimmerman Center, view looking northeast

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0003
View: Zimmerman Center, view looking southeast

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0004
View: Zimmerman Center, view looking south

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0005
View: Zimmerman Center, view looking west

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0006
View of Open Space 1, western open area, view looking east

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0007
View of Open Space 1, western open area, view looking northwest

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0008
View of Open Space 1, western open area, view looking north

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0009
View of Open Space 2, northern open area, view looking northeast

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- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0010
View of Open Space 2, northern open area, view looking northwest
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0011
View of Open Space 3, central open area, view looking southeast
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0012
View of Open Space 3, central open area, view looking northeast
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0013
View of Open Space 3, central open area, view looking north
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0014
View: View of northern tennis courts, view looking northeast
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0015
View: View of northern tennis courts, view looking southwest
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0016
View: View of northern tennis courts retaining wall, view looking west
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0017
View: View of northern tennis courts retaining wall, view looking northwest
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0018
View: View of northern tennis courts retaining wall, view looking southwest
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0019
View: View of Pioneer Park memorials, view looking west
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0020
View: View of Pioneer Park 1932 Memorial, view looking southwest
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0021
View of Open Space 4, eastern open area, view looking southwest
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0022
View of Open Space 4, eastern open area, view looking northwest
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0023
View of Open Space 4, eastern open area, view looking east
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0024
View: View of playground area, view looking southeast

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- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0025
View: View of playground area, view looking northwest
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0026
View: View of wading pool area, view looking southwest
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0027
View: View of wading pool, view looking northwest
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0028
View: View of restrooms, view looking west
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0029
View: View of restrooms, view looking northeast
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0030
View: View of southern tennis courts, view looking southeast
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0031
View: View of southern tennis courts, view looking northwest
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View: View of southern tennis courts, view looking northeast
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0033
View: View of horseshoe pits, view looking northeast
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0034
View: View of central pathway, view looking north
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0035
View: View of central pathway, view looking northwest
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0035
View: View of central pathway, view looking southeast
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0037
View: View of park storage facility, view looking south
- MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0038
View: View of park storage facility, view looking southeast
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View: View of park storage facility, view looking east

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View: View of park storage facility, view looking west

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View of Open Space 5, southern open area, view looking west

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View of Open Space 5, southern open area, view looking north

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0043

View: View of baseball field, view looking southwest

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0044

View of Open Space 5, southern open area, view looking east

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0045

View of Open Space 5, southern open area, view looking south

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0046

View: View of southwestern corner of park, view looking south

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0047

View: View of southwestern corner of park, view looking north

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0048

View: View of creek, view looking north

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0049

View: View of creek and southern footbridge, view looking west

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0050

View: View of creek and northern footbridge, view looking northwest

MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0051

View: View of creek, view looking northwest

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Historic Photographs and Aerials

1. Photograph of Pioneer Park taken from a passing aircraft, looking southeast, 1926.
2. Photograph of "Snake Creek," 1926.
3. Photograph taken from a passing aircraft of Toboggan Slide in Northeastern corner of Pioneer Park, 1926.
4. Photograph of Pioneer Park in Winter, 1920s.
5. Photograph of Pioneer Park gardens in eastern open space, 1930s.
6. Photographs of Billings' Bicentennial Anniversary Parade, 1932.
7. Photograph of Pioneer Park flooding, 1937.
8. Photograph of Billings, Montana, taken from a passing aircraft, looking northeast/east, 1940.
9. Photograph of the Pioneer Park Fire Station (Zimmerman Center).
10. Photograph of the Pioneer Park Fire Station with Engine #4 outside.
11. Senior School Photo of Miss Dorothy Gray in June 1914.
12. National Garden Week Advertisement by Dorothy M. Gray, Landscape Artist, 1923.
13. Advertisements for Dorothy M. Gray and the Jewel Nursery from the "Shopping in Billings With BETTY The Gazette Shopper" section of the *Billings Gazette*, March 1924.
14. Photograph of Miss Dorothy M. Gray, President of the Billings Garden Club, 1927.
15. Photograph of Mrs. J. Carter Johnson, Park Designer of Pioneer Park, 1932.

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1. Photograph of Pioneer Park taken from a passing aircraft looking southeast, 1926. Visible in this image are the six southern tennis courts, the original wading pool and pool house, and "Snake Creek." Downtown Billings can be seen off in the distance. Also note the lack of development around the park. Source: Baumgartner, N. "Elevation to SE." Billings, MT: Western Heritage Center, 1926.

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2. Photo of "Snake Creek," also known as McKenzie/McKinsey Creek, Spring Creek, and Crooked Creek, taken from a passing aircraft in 1926. Source: The Land Group, Inc. "*Pioneer Park Master Plan Update 2010*." Coeur d'Alene, ID, 2010. 17.



3. Photograph taken from a passing aircraft of Toboggan Slide in Northeastern corner of Pioneer Park, 1926. Source: The Land Group, Inc. "*Pioneer Park Master Plan Update 2010*." Coeur d'Alene, ID, 2010. 19.

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4. Photograph of Pioneer Park in the Winter, 1920s. View looking southeast. Source: Western Heritage Center, Billings, Montana.



5. Photograph of Pioneer Park gardens in eastern open space, 1930s. View of the park looking northwest. Source: Western Heritage Center, Billings, Montana.

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6. Photographs of Billings' Bicentennial Anniversary Parade, 1932. The parade featured prominent Crow Indians, Cowboys, and vehicles from the 1880s and 1890s. The parade ran through the business district and ended at Pioneer Park for the unveiling of the pioneer plaque. Source: Bicentennial Parade. 1932. Billings – Images of Places, Billings Public Library, Billings, MT.

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7. Photograph of Pioneer Park flooding, 1937. Water raging through the park from the “Great Flood of 1937” the day after the rain event. View looking to the southeast. Visible in this image is the northern tennis courts and retaining wall built by the WPA in 1936. Source: Western Heritage Center, Billings, MT.

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8. Photograph of Billings, Montana, taken from a passing aircraft, looking northeast/east, 1940. Visible in this image are both the northern and southern tennis courts, wading pool, and new school construction to the south of the park. The more development of the neighborhood around the park can be seen in this image also. Source: Western Heritage Center, Billings, MT.

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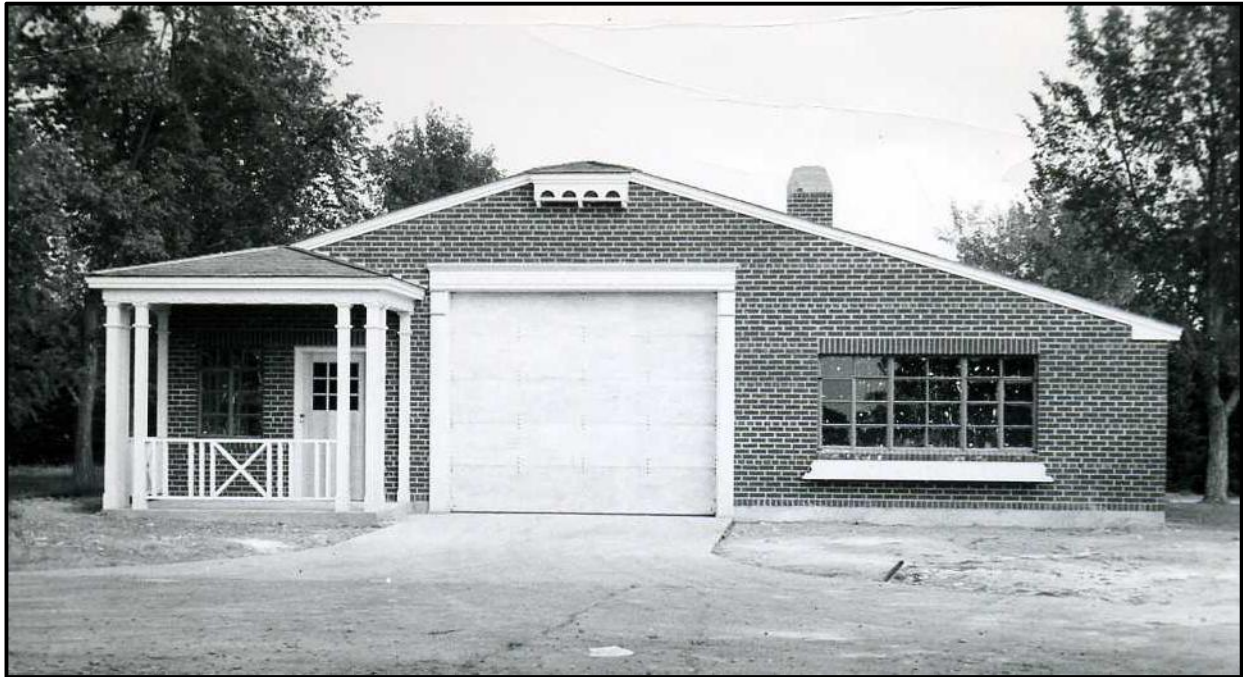
Name of Property

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9. Photograph of the Pioneer Park Fire Station (Zimmerman Center)[Above]. Visible is the now enclosed porch entrance and garage door. Source: Western Heritage Center, Billings, MT.



10. Photograph of the Pioneer Park Fire Station with Engine #4 outside (Above). Source: Western Heritage Center, Billings, MT.

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11. Senior School Photo of Miss Dorothy Gray in June 1914. Her senior quote read: "In her quietness there is a charm." Source: *Kyote Annual*, Western Heritage Center, Billings, MT.



12. National Garden Week Advertisement by Dorothy M. Gray, Landscape Artist, 1923. Source: "Attention! Free Landscape Plans During National Garden Week." *The Billings Gazette* (Billings, MT). MT, April 22, 1923.

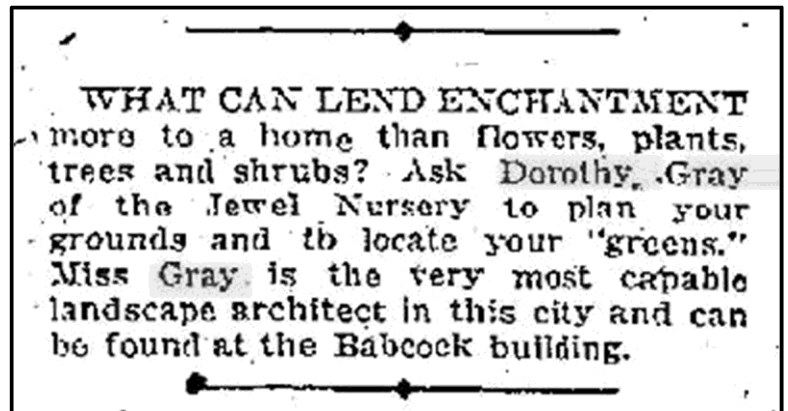
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13. Advertisements for Dorothy M. Gray and the Jewel Nursery from the "Shopping in Billings With BETTY The Gazette Shopper" section of the *Billings Gazette*, March 1924. Both ads, lower two images, promote the beautification of your home and the city through gardening with the help of Dorothy Gray's expertise as a "capable landscape architect." Source: "Shopping in Billings With BETTY The Gazette Shopper - WHAT CAN LEND ENCHANTMENT." *The Billings Gazette* (Billings, MT), March 1924.

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14. Photograph of Miss Dorothy M. Gray, President of the Billings Garden Club, 1927. From the "Society" section of The Billings Gazette, 1927. Source: "SOCIETY - Club Meets Tuesday." *The Billings Gazette* (Billings, MT), September 4, 1927.

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15. Photograph of Mrs. J. Carter Johnson, Park Designer of Pioneer Park, 1932. Mrs. Dorothy Johnson was a prominent and active member of the Billings community. Source: "Program Advanced by Garden Club Results In Much Beautification of Billings Yards - Tree Spraying Activity is Resultful." *The Billings Gazette* (Billings, MT), July 31, 1932.

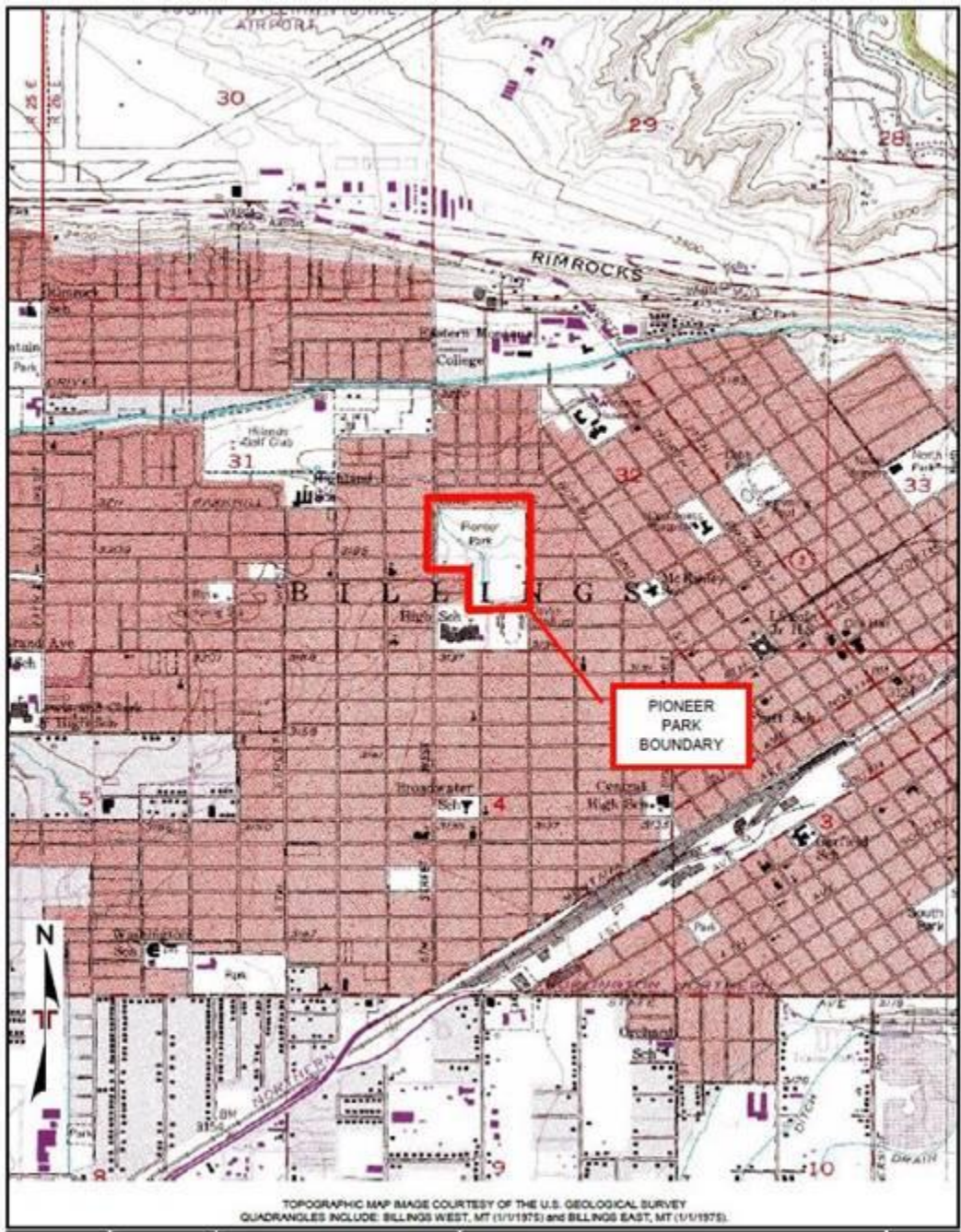


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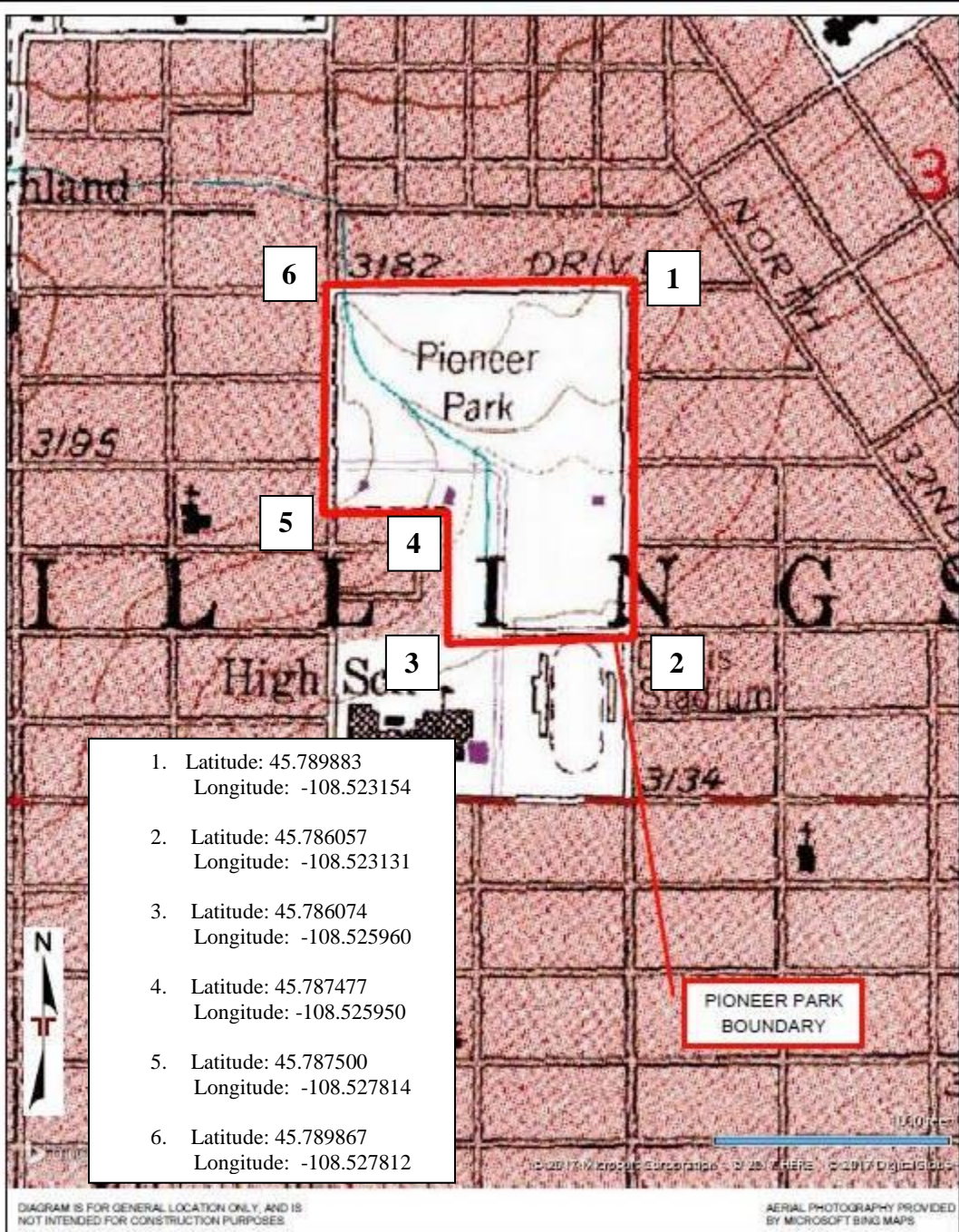
Location of Pioneer Park, found on the Billings West (1975) and Billings East (1975) 7.5' Quadrangle Maps. Drawn by Nick Powell.

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Close up location of Pioneer Park, found on the Billings West (1975) and Billings East (1975) 7.5' Quadrangle Maps. Drawn by Nick Powell.

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- 1. Latitude: 45.789883 Longitude: -108.523154
- 2. Latitude: 45.786057 Longitude: -108.523131
- 3. Latitude: 45.786074 Longitude: -108.525960
- 4. Latitude: 45.787477 Longitude: -108.525950
- 5. Latitude: 45.787500 Longitude: -108.527814
- 6. Latitude: 45.789867 Longitude: -108.527812



Pioneer Park, Billings, MT Boundary with Latitude and Longitude Coordinates, prepared by Nick Powell.

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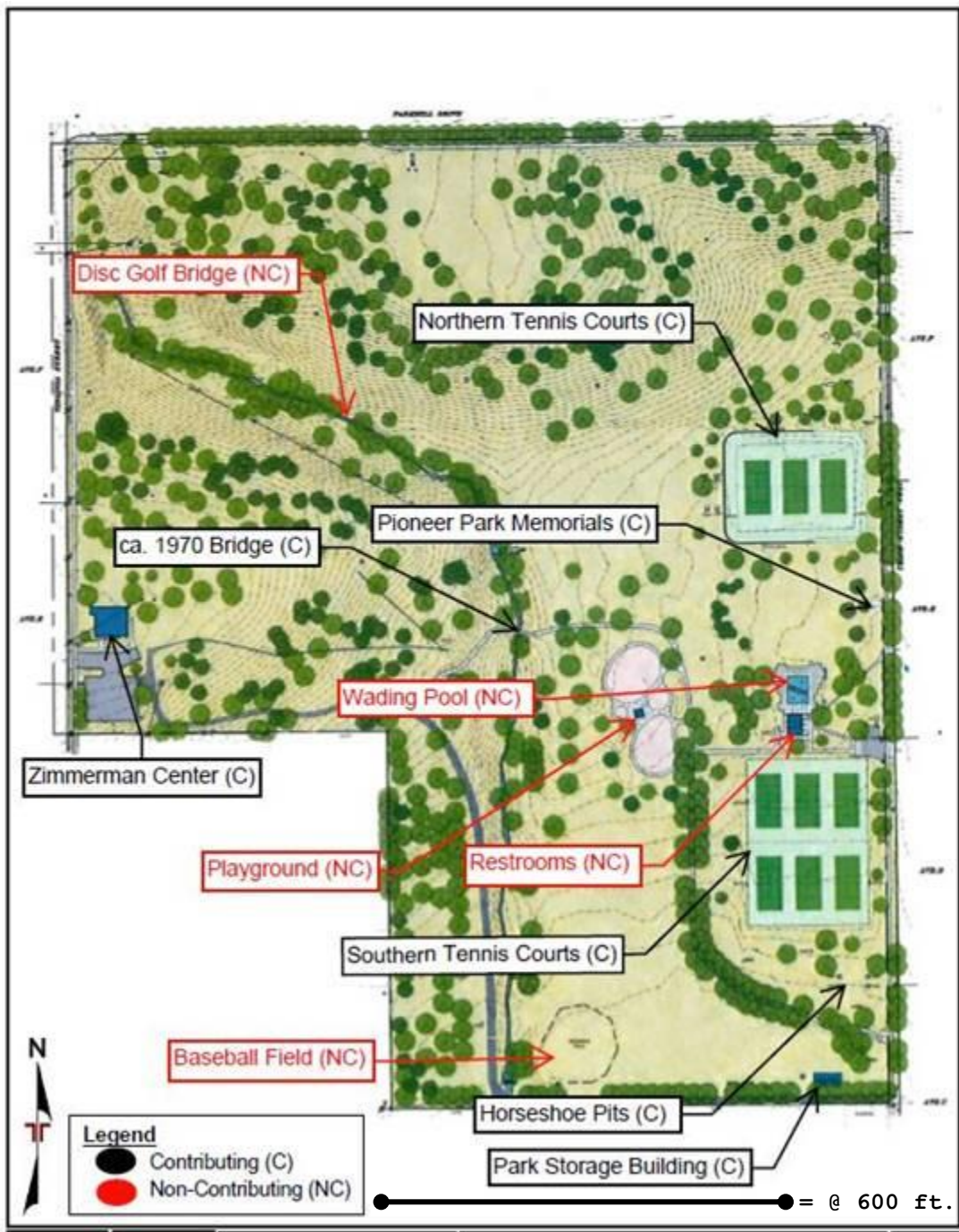
Pioneer Park Open Space Resources/Sketch Map. Prepared by Nick Powell.

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Pioneer Park Resources/Sketch Map. Prepared by Nick Powell.

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Pioneer Park Photo Location Map. Prepared by Nick Powell.

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1937 Aerial Photograph of Pioneer Park, Billings, MT., prepared by Nick Powell.

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1946 Aerial Photograph of Pioneer Park, Billings, MT., prepared by Nick Powell.

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1957 Aerial Photograph of Pioneer Park, Billings, MT., prepared by Nick Powell.

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1969 Aerial Photograph of Pioneer Park, Billings, MT., prepared by Nick Powell.

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1975 Aerial Photograph of Pioneer Park, Billings, MT., prepared by Nick Powell.

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1981 Aerial Photograph of Pioneer Park, Billings, MT., prepared by Nick Powell.

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1996 Aerial Photograph of Pioneer Park, Billings, MT., prepared by Nick Powell.

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2015 Aerial Photograph of Pioneer Park, Billings, MT., prepared by Nick Powell.

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Zimmerman Center, view looking north

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0002
Zimmerman Center, view looking northeast

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0003
Zimmerman Center, view looking southeast

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0004
Zimmerman Center, view looking south

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0005
Zimmerman Center, view looking west

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0006
View of Open Space 1, western open area, view looking east

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0007
View of Open Space 1, western open area, view looking northwest

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0008
View of Open Space 1, western open area, view looking north

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0009
View of Open Space 2, northern open area, view looking northeast

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View of Open Space 2, northern open area, view looking northwest

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0011
View of Open Space 3, central open area, view looking southeast

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0012
View of Open Space 3, central open area, view looking northeast

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View of Open Space 3, central open area, view looking north

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0014
View of northern tennis courts, view looking northeast

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View of northern tennis courts, view looking southwest

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0016
View of northern tennis courts retaining wall, view looking west

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0017
View of northern tennis courts retaining wall, view looking northwest

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0018
View of northern tennis courts retaining wall, view looking southwest

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0019
View of Pioneer Park memorials, view looking west

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0020
View of Pioneer Park 1932 Memorial, view looking southwest

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View of Open Space 4, eastern open area, view looking southwest

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View of Open Space 4, eastern open area, view looking northwest

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0023
View of Open Space 4, eastern open area, view looking east

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0024
View of playground area, view looking southeast

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0025
View of playground area, view looking northwest

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0026
View of wading pool area, view looking southwest

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View of wading pool, view looking northwest

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0028
View of restrooms, view looking west

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
..... Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
..... County and State
..... Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0029
View of restrooms, view looking northeast

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0030
View of southern tennis courts, view looking southeast

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0031
View of southern tennis courts, view looking northwest

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0032
View of southern tennis courts, view looking northeast

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0033
View of horseshoe pits, view looking northeast

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0034
View of central pathway, view looking north

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0035
View of central pathway, view looking northwest

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0036
View of central pathway, view looking southeast

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0037
View of park storage facility, view looking south

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0038
View of park storage facility, view looking southeast

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
..... Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
..... County and State
..... Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0039
View of park storage facility, view looking east

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0040
View of park storage facility, view looking west

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0041
View of Open Space 5, southern open area, view looking west

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0042
View of Open Space 5, southern open area, view looking north

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0043
View of baseball field, view looking southwest

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0044
View of Open Space 5, southern open area, view looking east

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0045
View of Open Space 5, southern open area, view looking south

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0046
View of southwestern corner of park, view looking south

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0047
View of southwestern corner of park, view looking north

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0048
View of creek, view looking north

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0049
View of creek and southern footbridge, view looking west

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
----- Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
----- County and State
----- Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0050
View of creek and northern footbridge, view looking northwest

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Pioneer Park
..... Name of Property
Yellowstone, Montana
..... County and State
..... Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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MT_YellowstoneCounty_PioneerPark_0051
View of creek and northern footbridge, view looking northwest