

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

historic name Clemens Field

other name/site number N/A

street & town 401 Collier NA not for publication

city or town Hannibal N/A vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Marion code 127 zip code 63401

State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark A. Miles Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO July 14, 2008 Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Comments on the Property

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain.) _____	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	4	buildings
1		sites
2	2	structures
		objects
3	6	Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: sports facility

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: sports facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: baseball diamond

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: limestone

walls STONE: limestone

CONCRETE

roof ASPHALT

other METAL: steel

Narrative Description

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

8. Description

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1937-1958

Significant Dates

1939

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Clemens Field
Name of Property

Marion County, MO
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 9.9 acres

UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/5 6/4/0/7/9/5 4/3/9/6/3/7/4
Zone Easting Northing

2 1/5 6/4/0/9/7/6 4/3/9/6/4/7/6
Zone Easting Northing

3 1/5 6/4/1/0/5/9 4/3/9/6/3/3/9
Zone Easting Northing

4 1/5 6/4/0/8/7/4 4/3/9/6/2/4/0
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Property Tax No. 20-10-8-28-3-13-001

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Tony Gardner

organization Gardner Historic Property Consultants date 2-25-08

street & number 3000 DeGroff Way telephone 916-262-2515

city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64108

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs: Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name/title City of Hannibal

street & number 320 Broadway telephone 573-222-0001

city or town Hannibal state MO zip code 63401

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

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

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**Clemens Field
Marion County, MO**

Description

Clemens Field is located at 401 Collier Street, in Hannibal, Marion County, Missouri, just southwest of downtown and the city's well-known Mark Twain and North Main Street Historic Districts (NR listed 1/4/1978 and 8/1/1986, respectively). Clemens Field is composed of two contributing structures: a grandstand constructed of concrete and steel, and a lengthy and highly distinctive eight-foot tall limestone wall. The wall encompasses approximately 9.9 acres. The focal point of the enclosed area is the grandstand that is situated on the southwest corner and looks out onto the main baseball field. There are four non-contributing buildings on the property: a large a motor pool barn with gable roof and corrugated metal siding located on the north edge of the site, a small restroom and two concession stand building. A second baseball diamond sits on the northeast perimeter and is flanked by two sets of bleachers (non-contributing structures). The site also includes a total of three athletic fields, fences, chain-link backstops, light standards and some landscape features (sidewalks, flowerbeds, and scattered trees). The fields and related elements are counted as a single contributing site. These elements are not included in the resource count, but are illustrated on the attached site plan. Clemens field was built as a Work Progress Administration (WPA) project between 1937 and 1939.

The 8-foot limestone wall is the primary boundary, but the wall itself is bounded to the north by Collier Street, roughly between Third Street, and Fifth Street, which run north and south. On the east the property is bound by the Admiral Coontz Armory building, which was built by the WPA using the same locally quarried limestone used for Clemens Field. To the south lies the Burlington Northern Railroad Tracks and, beyond the tracks, Bear Creek. The stadium is bound on the west by a loose gravel parking lot.

The grandstand is located in the southwest corner of the walled-in area. Built to accommodate 2,000 fans, the grandstand is roughly as tall as a four-story building, and has an irregular shape. It is capped by a large, pitched, asphalt roof with gables at either end. The roof is supported by four structural steel columns in the bleachers area. At the rear of the grandstand, another eight structural steel columns extend to the roofline. The grandstand is composed of a structural steel "shell" which is filled with poured-in-place concrete. The concrete constitutes the steps and bleacher seats. There are three staircases and two ramps which lead down into the interior of the grandstand. The underside of the roof is dramatic in the use of structural steel columns and steel buttresses. The steel columns rise 60 feet and are topped with fan-shaped projections to provide greater structural stability.

The rear of the grandstand reveals on either end the structural steel that composes the seats. In the middle is a four-bay, gray cinderblock wall supported by brackets at the top. The original door and window openings have been boarded up and infilled with cinderblock.

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**Clemens Field
Marion County, MO**

Inside the grandstand, which is accessible via the ramps or door openings in the rear wall, are two primary spaces, both of which appear to the spartan in design and use. The structural components of the grandstand dominate the interior space, with concrete pillars and steel beams stationed at the rear of the space. The rear wall is shaped like inverted seats, which suggests the amenities were installed around the concrete and steel beams. One area once served as a ticket selling window and concession, as evidenced by the window openings. Two paneled steel doors lead into another area, where restrooms, showers and locker rooms were once located. The structural components of the grandstand dominate the interior space, suggesting the amenities were installed around the concrete and steel beams. Today the only remnants of the past use are antiquated toilet stalls, wall-mounted sinks, water heaters, piping and drains and period light fixtures.

The grandstand faces northeast onto its related baseball diamond and also affords views of the other athletic fields. Typical of ballpark planning, the home plate-pitcher's mound-second base axis runs southwest to northeast to diminish the effects of the sun.¹

Most of Clemens Field is bounded by an 8-foot rubble limestone wall periodically marked with dozens of buttresses. The stone wall, quarried locally by WPA workers, is irregular in shape and features deep grooves. From the north end of the grandstand, a lengthy wall, broken by one opening, stretches north. The main entrance to the field is canted at the corner of Collier and the parking area that lies west of the grandstand. There, to the left of the wall opening, the stone wall is inset with concrete slabs incised with the name "Clemens Field." This marker is also located at four other locations on the outside face of the wall. The north wall runs parallel to Collier Street for a distance of approximately three blocks. The eastern portion of the stone wall separates Clemens Field from the Admiral Coontz Armory, which was built of the same stone during the same period of construction as Clemens Field. The south wall separates the field from the Burlington Northern railway bed, which is located on the banks of Bear Creek.

A modern utilitarian building owned by the City of Hannibal and used by the Parks and Recreation Department stand on the north side site, just inside the stone wall and east of the canted entrance. There are also two small utilitarian buildings (non-contributing) used as restrooms and concession stand along Collier Street, a second non-contributing concession stand building is located north of the grandstand. Within the dominate stone wall is a series of chain-link fences used to delineate the outfields of each baseball diamond and to establish space for other athletic events that the site has hosted over the years. The northeast corner in particular has been modified into another ball field, with chain-link backstop and wooden bleachers (two-sets, non-contributing).

¹ Wheeler, Eric J. and Joanne Raetz Stuttgen. National Register of Historic Places nomination for Carson Park Baseball Stadium, Eau Claire County, WI, 2002.

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**Clemens Field
Marion County, MO**

The grandstand is in fair but reparable condition. It appears that it is structurally sound and that the structure requires work of a mostly cosmetic nature. The limestone wall is in excellent condition, with very little mortar loss. It appears to have been diligently cared for.

In the years following construction, the site was further developed by the addition of softball diamonds and small outbuildings owned by the Hannibal Parks and Recreation Department (noted in the descriptions above). While these non-contributing elements outnumber the contributing resources, they are very small in scale and do not affect the ability of Clemens Field to convey its significance. Additionally, Clemens Field's primary historic features--its large grandstand, stone fence and primary baseball diamond are intact and little altered since the property's 1937-1958 period of significance.

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**Clemens Field
Marion County, MO**

Statement of Significance

Clemens Field, located at 401 Collier Street in Hannibal, Marion County, Missouri, is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Entertainment/Recreation. First built in 1924 by a group of local businessmen and baseball enthusiasts, the ballpark was named for native son Samuel L. Clemens, who gained fame under the nom de plume Mark Twain. Clemens Field soon became the center of amateur and semi-professional baseball in Hannibal. The original Clemens Field, constructed to be the home of the Hannibal Travelers, hosted games between the home team, traveling semi-professional teams, and professional exhibition games. When a devastating fire destroyed the original field and grandstand in 1936, the city sought funding from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration (WPA) to reconstruct this significant entertainment venue. Using a \$40,000 WPA grant, local labor and locally quarried stone, the new Clemens Field opened to the public in 1939. Clemens Field had its heyday in the late 1940s and 1950s when two major league baseball franchises sponsored farm teams in Hannibal. In 1947 and 1948, the St. Louis Browns farm team, the Hannibal Pilots, used Clemens Field. In 1953 and 1954, the St. Louis Cardinals brought a team to town. In the years before and between professional affiliation, Clemens Field served a rich variety of baseball players, from local kids to unaffiliated minor leaguers to famous barnstormers. Beyond baseball, Clemens Field served broader public interests. For example, the years during World War II saw the field used as a temporary camp for German prisoners of war. After this brief but historically significant repurposing, the field once again became a center of baseball activity for the town. The period of significance is 1937 – the date construction began – through 1958, the fifty year closing date for periods of significance where activities begun historically continue to have importance, but no more specific date can be defined.

Elaboration:

Over the course of its 70-year history, Clemens Field has remained in use for the primary purpose of hosting baseball games. Its historical ties are rich for a town the size of Hannibal. Clemens Field has also retained its role as an important community gathering place and a foundation of Hannibal's civic identity.

Baseball's Birth and National Expansion

Though Abner Doubleday is often credited with inventing baseball in Cooperstown, New York in 1839, most of the game's scholars have argued against that assertion. Author Warren Goldstein, writing to debunk the notion, said "...no evidence has yet been produced to substantiate this account, and a huge amount of evidence, both direct and indirect, contradicts

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it.”² Despite questions about the game’s earliest origins, it is generally agreed that the modern game was shaped in 1845 by Alexander Cartwright, who established the rules for his Knickerbocker Club of New York and, in 1848, published them.³ In those years, baseball was limited in scope by geography and social custom. It was primarily enjoyed by wealthy New England clubmen.⁴

The American Civil War of 1860-1863 and the dispersion of New England ball players introduced the game to the country at large. When the war ended, new converts to the game went home and spread their enthusiasm, forming leagues and commencing play. Soon Club Baseball ownership and management evolved into a business that provides an interesting thread in the wider narrative of the Industrial Revolution. As America’s cities began to boom, powered by factories and mass-scale, assembly-line manufacturing, work became an activity done by crowds of people. This was also the case in entertainment and recreation. Circuses reached their heyday, drawing thousands to bleacher seats under the big top. Spectator sports like baseball and football began to dominate the leisure hours of the working and management class. Civic pride was soon embodied by ball clubs. Entrepreneurs developed teams, built stadiums (often in joint ventures with their host cities and towns), managed the venues and organize competitive play. A new class of professional athletes emerged to embody a new version of the American dream--getting paid to play a game. Natural athletic ability could trump social and economic barriers. Baseball and other sports served as barometers to gauge broader societal change.

In 1869, the Cincinnati Red Stockings played the first professional baseball games. In 1871, the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players was organized, followed in 1876 by the formation of the National League, which survives to this day.⁵ Among the National League’s eight charter franchises was the St. Louis Brown Stockings, which folded after the 1877 season. For the first few years of the National League’s history, St. Louis struggled to stay on the map. In 1885, the St. Louis Maroons, after a year of dominating the Union Association, joined the National League. The Maroons folded after the 1886 season. In 1892, when the St. Louis Browns formed and joined the National League, St. Louis became and remained a big-league town. The team underwent two name changes, playing for a time as the St. Louis Perfectos until they became the St. Louis Cardinals, as they are known today. In 1900-1901, the American League was organized and developed. Among its charter members was the Milwaukee Brewers club, which moved to St. Louis in 1902 and became known as the St. Louis Browns, a kind of homage

² Warren Goldstein. *Playing for Keeps: A History of Early Baseball* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 12.

³ Neil J. Sullivan. *The Diamond Revolution: The Prospects for Baseball After the Collapse of Its Ruling Class* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992) 21.

⁴ Neil J. Sullivan. *The Diamond Revolution: The Prospects for Baseball After the Collapse of Its Ruling Class* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992) 7.

⁵ Jules Tygiel. *Past Time: Baseball as History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 16.

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to the Browns of 1892. The city hosted both the Browns and the Cardinals until 1954, when the Browns moved to Baltimore and became the Orioles, a franchise which is also active today.

Because of its proximity to St. Louis, Hannibal and its citizens developed a strong affection for the big city's ball clubs. A major factor in the rise of baseball's popularity was due to the fact that the big league teams embodied not only local, but regional, pride. The establishment of the original Clemens Field in 1924 and its reconstruction after the 1936 fire was driven by local demand, which was likely stoked by the interest Hannibal's citizenry had in St. Louis and its teams.

Concurrent to the development and expansion of major league baseball in large American cities, a minor league system was implemented by entrepreneurs and supporters of the game who sought to produce younger players whose talent could feed the big league system.

The first minor league is traditionally considered to be the Northwest League of 1883 to 1884. Unlike the earlier minor associations, it was conceived as a permanent organization. It also, along with the National League and the American Association, was a party to the National Agreement of 1883. Included in this was the agreement to respect the reserve lists of clubs in each league. Teams in the National League and the American Association could only reserve players who had been paid at least \$1000. Northwest League teams could reserve players paid merely \$750. This implicitly established the division into major and minor leagues.

Over the next two decades many more minor leagues signed various versions of the National Agreement. Eventually the minor league joined together to negotiate jointly.

In the late 1890s, the Western League run by the fiery Ban Johnson decided to challenge the National League's position. In 1900, Johnson changed the name of the league to the American League and vowed to make deals to sign contracts with players who were dissatisfied with the pay and terms of their deals with the National League. This led to a nasty turf war that heated up in 1901 enough to concern Patrick T. Powers, president of the Eastern League, and many other minor league owners.

Representatives of the two leagues met at the Leland Hotel in Chicago in autumn 1901 and agreed to form the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, called the NABPL, or "NA" for short. (The "NA" uses the name Minor League Baseball today.) Powers was made the first president of the NABPL, whose offices were established in Auburn, New York. The purpose of the NA at the time was to maintain the independence of the leagues involved. Several did not sign the agreement, and continued to work independently.

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In 1903 the fight between the American and National Leagues ended in the National Agreement of 1903. The NABPL became involved in the later stages of the negotiations to develop rules for the acquisition of players from their leagues by the National and the American league franchises.

The NA was signed because players were being pilfered from clubs in other leagues with little or no compensation to the teams. The 1903 agreement ensured that teams would be compensated for the players that they had taken the time and effort to scout and develop. No NA team was required to sell their players, although most did because the cash became an important source of revenue for most teams.

These leagues were still fiercely independent, and the term "minor" was seldom used in reference to them, save by the major-market sports writers. News did not travel far in the days before television and radio, so, while the leagues often bristled at the major market writers descriptions, their viewpoint of the situation in that day was that they were independent sports businesses, no more and no less.

In 1922 the United States Supreme Court decision which grants baseball a special immunity from antitrust laws had a major effect on the minor leagues. The special immunity meant that the American and National leagues could dictate terms under which every independent league did business.

By 1925 major league baseball crammed down a flat-fee purchase of \$5,000 for the contract of any player from an NA league team. This power was leveled primarily at the Baltimore Orioles, then a Triple-A team that had dominated the minors with stars.

Leagues in the NA would not be truly called "minor" until Branch Rickey, general manager of the St. Louis Cardinals, developed the first modern "farm system" in the 1930s. It was Rickey who coined the term "farm system" when he described the relationship between big-league cities and small towns and rural regions by saying his organization was "growing players down on the farm like corn."

Years later, in 1947, Branch Rickey displayed his visionary qualities and the belief that natural athletic ability can overcome social restraints by signing Jackie Robinson to his first professional contract, with the Brooklyn Dodgers. This ideal of athletic ability as an entrée to a life of fame and relative fortune playing professional sports had long been manifested in physically gifted American farm boys and small town kids who found themselves manning the fields in New York, Boston, Cleveland, Chicago, St. Louis, and Pittsburgh. But not until Rickey and Robinson, was the color barrier crossed, changing the game immensely and soon exposing small-town white America to African-American and Latino players. In fact, it could be argued that World War II and baseball in the postwar years were the two biggest keys for integrating American society.

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As public interest in the game spread throughout the country in the 30s and 40s, towns and cities all over America built ballparks to accommodate the fans. Often the structures were constructed quickly and cheaply with wood. Many of these structures soon succumbed to fire, but were quickly rebuilt. Because most minor league teams struggled financially, many vanished after a year or two, leaving physical structures that often remained the foundation of the town's recreational culture. Clemens Field, which burned in 1936 and was rebuilt by the town of Hannibal in 1937-39, embodies both of these key characteristics of the minor leagues.

Hannibal's Baseball History Prior to Clemens Field

According to baseball historian Jay Hemond and Hannibal *Courier-Post* sports reporter Danny Henley, the first organized Hannibal baseball teams were the Hannibal Nationals, who played in 1871 and the Hannibal Blues, who played in 1886. Another team called the Hannibal Eagles had a brief tenure in 1902. Very few records of those teams have survived. The first well-documented club in town was an independent team called the Hannibal Cannibals, which played initially in the III-MO league in 1908. According to Henley, 3,337 fans attended the game, paying 15 cents per ticket. The Cannibals then moved to the Central Association from 1909 to 1912. In 1911 and 1912, the team was managed by Jake Beckley. Beckley was the classic baseball story. Born in Hannibal in 1867, Beckley began his playing career in 1888, then became a first baseman in the Players League in 1890. He then made the leap to the majors and played from 1904 to 1907 for the Pittsburgh Alleghenies and the St. Louis Cardinals. Beckley had a storied career and was inducted in the baseball Hall of Fame in 1971.⁶

According to Hemond, there was also a team in 1912 called the Hannibal Mules, which played in a "pro league," which Hemond said is akin to semi-pro. In 1916, a Hannibal team played in the 3-I League (Illinois, Indiana and Iowa). A few unaffiliated years passed until Clemens Field came on the drawing board and eventually took concrete shape.

Mark Twain and Clemens Field

The man for whom Hannibal, Missouri's ballpark was named, Samuel Clemens, was born in Florida, Missouri in 1835, and raised in Hannibal, just as baseball was in its infancy.⁷ Accounts of his boyhood find no reference to baseball, but by the time baseball had come to dominate recreational culture, Clemens was an avid fan. On May 18, 1875, while living in Hartford, Connecticut, Clemens attended a baseball game between the local Hartford Dark Blues and the

⁶ Jay Hemond Telephone Interview, April 2008.

⁷ Justin Kaplan. *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966), 6.

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Boston Red Stockings. Two days, later, a notice appeared in the Hartford *Courant* newspaper⁸:

⁸ Ron Powers. *Dangerous Water: A Biography of the Boy Who Became Mark Twain* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 152.

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To the Public:

TWO HUNDRED AND FIVE DOLLARS REWARD – At the great baseball match on Tuesday, while I was engaged in hurrahing, a small boy made off with an English-made brown silk umbrella belonging to me & forgot to bring it back. I will pay \$5 for the return of that umbrella in good condition to my house on Farmington Avenue. I do not want the boy (in an active state) but will pay two hundred dollars for his remains.

Samuel L. Clemens

Clemens, or Mark Twain, as he became known in the 1880s, found his niche in baseball as an umpire and spectator. The subject came up occasionally in his speeches, lectures and correspondences. In an 1889 issue of the *Boston Daily Globe* appeared an excerpt of a recent Twain speech about a visit to the Sandwich Islands in which he spoke about the incompatibility between baseball and the natives. One of the most memorable lines, however, was a testament to the parallels between baseball and the 19th Century:

And these boys played base ball there! Base ball, which is the very symbol, the outward and visible expression of the drive, and push, and rush and struggle of the raging, tearing, booming 19th Century.⁹

By the time he became a famous novelist, baseball appeared in his fiction. In his 1889 work, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Twain wrote extensively in Chapter 40 about teaching baseball to the Knights of the Round Table, who played in full armor. In keeping with his own experience with the game, Twain put much colorful emphasis on the perils as umpiring:

The umpire's first decision was usually his last; they broke him in two with a bat and his friends toted him home on a shutter. When it was noticed that no umpire ever survived a game, umpiring got to be unpopular.¹⁰

One of Twain's most recent biographers, Ron Powers, used baseball to illustrate the various aspects of the writer's character¹¹:

I really wasn't to show people the real person. He's a real human being, a person I really love. He's part of Hannibal's culture, salty, funny, wisecracking culture, identified with

⁹ Justin Kaplan. *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966), 188.

¹⁰ Justin Kaplan. *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966), 190.

¹¹ Ron Powers. *Dangerous Water: A Biography of the Boy Who Became Mark Twain* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 5.

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the common man, nothing pretentious . . . He's hysterically funny. He said some of the funniest things, he was Yogi Berra of his time. He went to baseball games.

Hannibal's Baseball History After Clemens Field

The confluence between Hannibal's most famous native son and baseball occurred in 1924, with the construction of the first Clemens Field. The site of the old Cruikshank Lumber Mill on Third and Collier was first acquired in a July 1924 Quit Claim Deed executed by J.P. Richards and his wife Ella Richards. The following year, a group of Hannibal businessmen and baseball enthusiasts led by L.H. Quick purchased the site for \$8,000. Their goal was to build a home field closer to downtown for the town's team, the Hannibal Travelers, which competed in the Ill-Mo League. After naming the site Clemens Field, workers in short order built a diamond and wooden grandstand seating 2000. The first baseball game, between the Hannibal Travelers and the Quincy Eagles, was played in spring 1925. A few months later, in October 1925, one of the most notable games to be played on the new field was an exhibition game between the big-league St. Louis Browns and the Hannibal team. The Browns won 9-3, in front of about 1,100 fans.

Clemens Field was soon expanded into a multipurpose athletic field and began to host other events, including a 1925 boxing match between local favorite Les Gartner and Mike Sansome, the world champion of the 115-pound class. Clemens Field was also used by Hannibal High School for its football games and track meets through the early 30s. When Hannibal-LaGrange College opened in 1929, its major spectator sports were played on Clemens Field.

Notably, Clemens Field was the site of a night baseball game on August 15, 1930, five years before the first major league games were played under electric lights. This event came courtesy of the Kansas City Monarchs, one of the most popular teams in the Negro Leagues. The Monarchs carried their own lighting system with them and benefited most from the new technology, beating the Hannibal team 16-1. According to a local newspaper account, "the Monarchs led the Hannibal team thirteen runs to one at the end of the second ending. Thereafter, they coasted and clowned."¹²

Throughout the 1930s, Clemens Field was hosted many disparate events, including horse shows and traveling exhibits. Like many small towns during the Great Depression, Hannibal and its citizens focused much of its social life on the city's public sporting venues, where entertainment and activity was frequent, varied and inexpensive.

On August 14, 1936, a fire at Clemens Field burned the grandstand to the ground. By November of that year, the City of Hannibal and the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) began

¹² *Hannibal Courier-Journal*, 16 August 1930.

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collaborating on a rebuilding project.

One of the largest, most powerful and popular agencies to spring from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal plan to counter the devastating effects of the Great Depression that gripped 1930s America, the Works Progress Administration was created in April 1935. Headed by Harry L. Hopkins, the WPA (known after 1939 as the Work Progress Administration) constructed many public buildings, roads, recreational areas, and other infrastructure such as utilities, sewers, dams, as well as operating large arts, drama and literacy projects. The program's primary goal was to give work to the legions of unemployed blue-collar workers who lost their jobs in the wake of the October 1929 stock market crash. In fact, 90% of the WPA workforce was made up of the blue-collar population. By the time it was discontinued by Congress in 1943, due to World War II, the WPA built 650,000 miles of roads, 78,000 bridges, 125,000 buildings, and 800 miles of airport runways.¹³

In many ways, the WPA was the perfect agency to restore Hannibal's lost ballpark. It provided a great social service to the town and helped allay the sense of gloom that fell over Hannibal due to its economic hardship and the loss of one of its most popular recreational and cultural site. The WPA's involvement in the project created jobs for many workers thrown into unemployment by the local economic downturn. The project created a sense of pride and purpose for many of the townspeople. For the Clemens Field project, the City of Hannibal and the WPA, lead by WPA director Henry G. Riedel, arrived at a \$50,000 budget to construct a rock wall, replace the 2,000 seat grandstand and upgrade the field. The WPA agreed to furnish between \$35,000 and \$40,000 for labor and materials, while the City put up \$10,000 for materials.¹⁴

Work on the new Clemens Field began in earnest in December 1936, just in time to provide winter employment, and Christmas money, for local men on the WPA rolls. The initial work mostly consisted of quarrying local limestone from nearby Riverside Street, on a site already operated by the WPA to provide material for other local projects. After several months of labor-intensive quarrying by hand, the old wooden fence that had surrounded Clemens Field was torn down and a new limestone wall was constructed. It was during this phase of construction on the ballpark that local and WPA officials decided to use the limestone quarry to build an armory on the site where the burned-down grandstand once stood.

City Engineer George W. Farrell produced plans for the armory. The project created jobs for an additional 130 men. The two-story structure measured 180 feet by 80 feet. The cornerstone was laid on June 24, 1938 and the building became the home of Company L of the National Guard. The armory was later named in honor of Admiral Robert E. Coontz.

¹³ Jason Scott Smith. *Building New Deal Liberalism: The Political Economy of Public Works, 1933-1956* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 19.

¹⁴ *Hannibal Courier-Journal*, 9 May 1936.

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The new Clemens Field grandstand, designed to hold 2,000 spectators, was constructed of concrete and structural steel, which was provided by the Dildine Bridge and Iron Company. The City Council accepted the company's bid of \$9,600. This version of the grandstand included concession stands and restrooms for patrons on the west façade, as well as showers, locker rooms and restrooms for the players inside the structure. In October 1939, members of the National Youth Administration completed construction by seeding the field with grass and painting the grandstand and bleachers.

By the following spring, Clemens Field was back in play. Though many sporting events, exhibitions and shows took place at Clemens Field, baseball remained the most notable activity. Barnstorming teams of various stripes came to town. A local newspaper account recalls a game between the Hannibal team and The House of David, a team from Benton Harbor, Michigan. According to the paper, "The House of David was a team of exceptional merit. Each player had a long beard, which was a mark of the religious sect to which they belonged." The team always drew a large crowd because its players were considered "eccentric."¹⁵

The rebirth of Clemens Field coincided with the first faint rumblings of World War II. By 1944, the conflict had reached Hannibal in an unexpected way. That fall, 200 German war prisoners took up residence in tents that were enclosed by the stone wall of Clemens Field, and several layers of barbed wire. The prisoners were put to work sorting military shoes that had been collected by the army and sent to Hannibal shoe factories for repair. The repaired shoes were then shipped to refugees in Europe.

During the war, Clemens Field suffered through several floods and much erosion. When the conflict was over, in the fall of 1945, more than 400 loads of silt from the Hannibal riverfront was hauled to Clemens Field and used to level the surface.

With the improvements completed, the Hannibal City Council voted to appropriate \$15,000 to further improve the Clemens Field ballpark to guarantee Hannibal a team in the Corn Belt League for the 1946 season. Soon after, the City installed the first lights at Clemens Field, more than 17 years after the night game with the Kansas City Monarchs.

In 1947 and 1948, the St. Louis Browns major league baseball franchise sponsored a farm team called the Hannibal Pilots. Playing in the Central Association, the Hannibal team hosted opponents from Moline, Burlington, Keokuk, Rockford and Clinton at Clemens Field. During this stretch Hannibal's biggest star player was Roy Sievers, who lead the league in runs (121), hits (159), RBI (144) and home runs (34) in a 125 game season. Thanks in large part to Sievers

¹⁵ *Hannibal Courier-Journal*, 30 April 1940.

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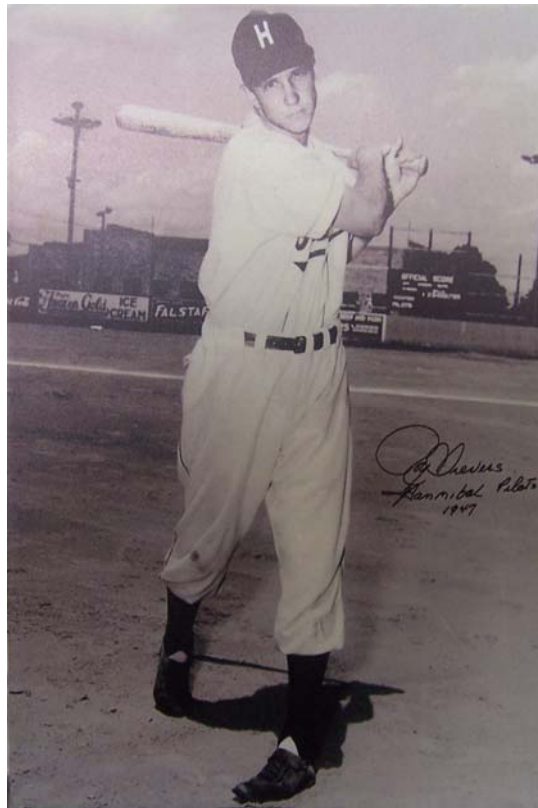
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**Clemens Field
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and star pitcher Charles Funk, Hannibal made the playoffs, losing to Clinton in the finals¹⁶. Unfortunately, in 1949, the team folded. Sievers, however, went on to play outfield for the St. Louis Browns.

Roy Sievers, c. 1947



A fallow time followed. It wasn't until 1952 that Hannibal and Clemens Field hosted pro ball. This time it was a team called the Stags, who played in the Mississippi-Ohio Valley League, predecessor to the Midwest League, which still plays today. Then, in 1953-54, the Cardinals brought pro baseball back, albeit briefly to Hannibal and Clemens Field. The manager was James "Jimmy" Brown, a former player for the Cardinals.

After the Cardinals farm team left in 1955, the last Hannibal team, known as the Citizens, played one season. After the Citizens folded, it was the end of pro or semi-pro baseball in Hannibal.

Soon after the pro teams left town, Hannibal popped up as a footnote in American popular culture. In 1955, the musical "Damn Yankees" premiered on Broadway in New York City and

¹⁶ Jay Hemond Telephone Interview, April 2008.

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soon became a hit. With music by Richard Adler and lyrics by Jerry Ross, and a book by George Abbott and Douglas Wallop, "Damn Yankees" ran for more than 1,000 performances.

The plot revolves around Joe Boyd, a middle-aged fan of the struggling Washington Senators franchise. Boyd, in his desperation to see his team turn into winners, tells his wife that he'd sell his soul for the long-ball hitter the Senators sorely need. In a modern turn on the classic tale "Faust," the devil appears in the guise of a slick salesman, Mr. Applewhite. Boyd, after negotiating an escape clause, agrees to be transformed into a young, strong, baseball slugger named Joe Hardy, who soon emerges as the ball club's savior. A local reporter, referring to Joe's emergence from nowhere, dubs him "Shoeless Joe from Hannibal, Mo." That catchy phrase was turned into one of the musical's numbers and kept Hannibal in the American consciousness.

Establishing Hannibal as Joe Hardy's hometown plays well into the whole concept of a small town growing a great player, like Branch Rickey's famous quote about big-league teams growing their talent "down on the farm like corn." It also furthered the notion of many Americans of Hannibal as the quintessential American small town, a concept developed by Mark Twain in his classic novels "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" and "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer." As good a springboard as any for someone to write the Great American Novel, or play professionally at America's favorite pastime.

In the years since the Cardinals farm team came and went, organized baseball at Clemens Field has been sporadic. The site has, however, remained in use for local baseball, softball and other sporting events, as well as a variety of shows and exhibits.

In the following years, the site was further developed by the addition of softball diamonds and an outbuilding owned by the Hannibal Parks and Recreation Department.

However, beyond maintenance and general repair, no significant changes have occurred to Clemens Field since the 1937-1939 period of construction. Today, Clemens Field, its impressive limestone wall, and the large, two-story limestone Coontz Armory on the neighboring lot create a visually striking tableau on the south side of Hannibal's downtown National Register district. Beyond its architectural merits, Clemens Field is emblematic of Hannibal's recreational and cultural past, present, and future.

In the fall of 2007, a group called Hannibal Baseball LLC began negotiating with Hannibal city officials to bring a collegiate team to town. Team owners and local leaders targeted Clemens Field for extensive rehabilitation so that it could host the new team and its opponents. The team's owners, Larry Owens and Bob Hemond, assembled a Board of Directors stocked with baseball professionals, including current Arizona Diamondbacks General Manager Roland Hemond, former St. Louis Cardinals GM Walt Jocketty, executive Lee Thomas of the

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Philadelphia Phillies, former Cardinals player "Red" Schoendienst, and former Kansas City Royals second baseman Frank White. Project officials hope to use tax credits and funds from Missouri's Dream Initiative to bring this historic home of baseball back to life.

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Boundary Description

Parts of the Outlot Forty-four (44) and the right-of-way of the South Fifth Street (abandoned), in the City of Hannibal, Missouri, more fully described as follows, to-wit:

Begin at the point of the South side of Collier Street, said point being Twenty-seven (27) feet West of the West line of Outlot Forty-four (44) in the City of Hannibal; thence proceed in a Southerly direction parallel to West Line of Outlot Forty-four (44) for a distance of Sixty-one and 5/10 (61.5) feet; thence proceed in an easterly direction parallel to the South line of Collier Street for a distance of Two Hundred (200.0) feet; thence in a Northerly direction for a distance of Sixty-one and 5/10 (61.5) feet parallel to the aforementioned West line of Outlot Forty-four (44) to a point on the South line of Collier Street; thence in a westerly direction along said South line of Collier Street for a distance of Two Hundred (200.0) feet to the point of the beginning.

Together with an easement of right-of-way for the purpose of gaining ingress and egress to said lands over and along the North Sixteen (16) feet of the property now owned by the City and designated as Clemens Field, lying on the South Side of Collier Street, from the East line of the above described tract granted to the State of Missouri, to the gate in the wall of Clemens Field, which is located in Fourth Street.

The boundaries are also seen on the attached site plan.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the grandstand, the limestone wall, the interior field and baseball diamonds that compose the tract. The boundaries include all the land historically associated with the Clemens Field constructed in 1937-1939.

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**Clemens Field
Marion County, MO**

The following is true for all photographs:

Clemens Field

Hannibal, Marion County, Missouri

Photographer: Tony Gardner

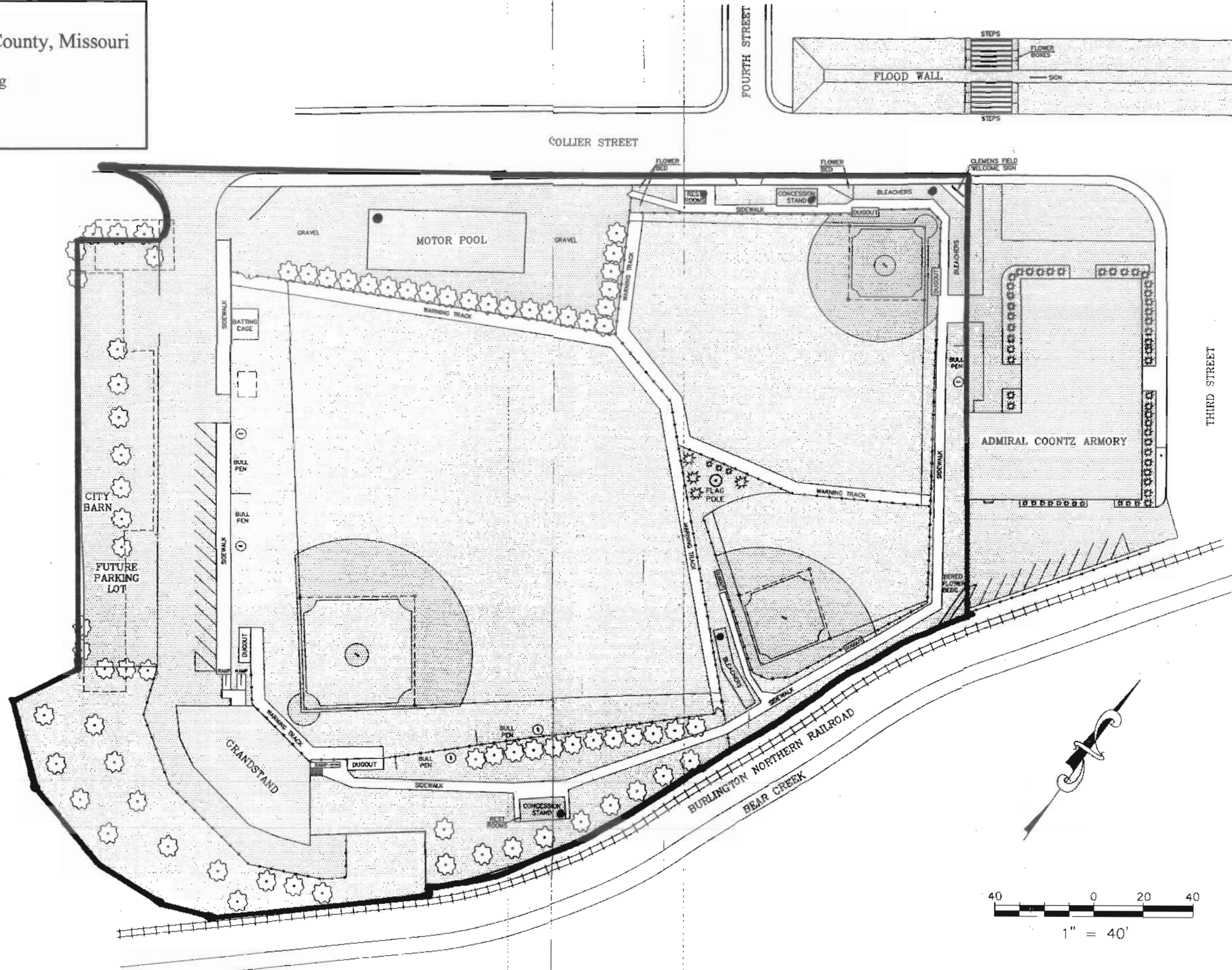
Date: January 2008

Negatives on File with: Tony Gardner, Gardner Historic Property Consultants

1. Clemens Field grandstand and stone wall, facing south.
2. Clemens Field, canted Collier Street entrance, facing south.
3. Clemens Field stone wall and grandstand, facing south.
4. Clemens Field stone wall and outbuilding along Collier Street, facing southeast.
5. Clemens Field, southeast corner, facing southeast.
6. Clemens Field, southeast corner, armory building in background, facing southeast.
7. Clemens Field, eastern stone wall, grand stand and rear of Armory building, facing west.
8. Clemens Field grandstand, facing southwest.
9. Clemens Field grandstand, roof structure detail, facing west.
10. Clemens Field grandstand, roof structure detail, facing southwest.
11. Clemens Field grandstand rear elevation, facing east.
12. Clemens Field grand stand, interior, facing east.
13. Clemens Field grandstand, interior light fixture, facing west.
14. Clemens Field grandstand, interior, bathroom stalls.
15. Clemens Field grandstand, interior, original sink, facing west.

Clemens Field
Hannibal, Marion County, Missouri

- Non-Contributing
- Boundary line

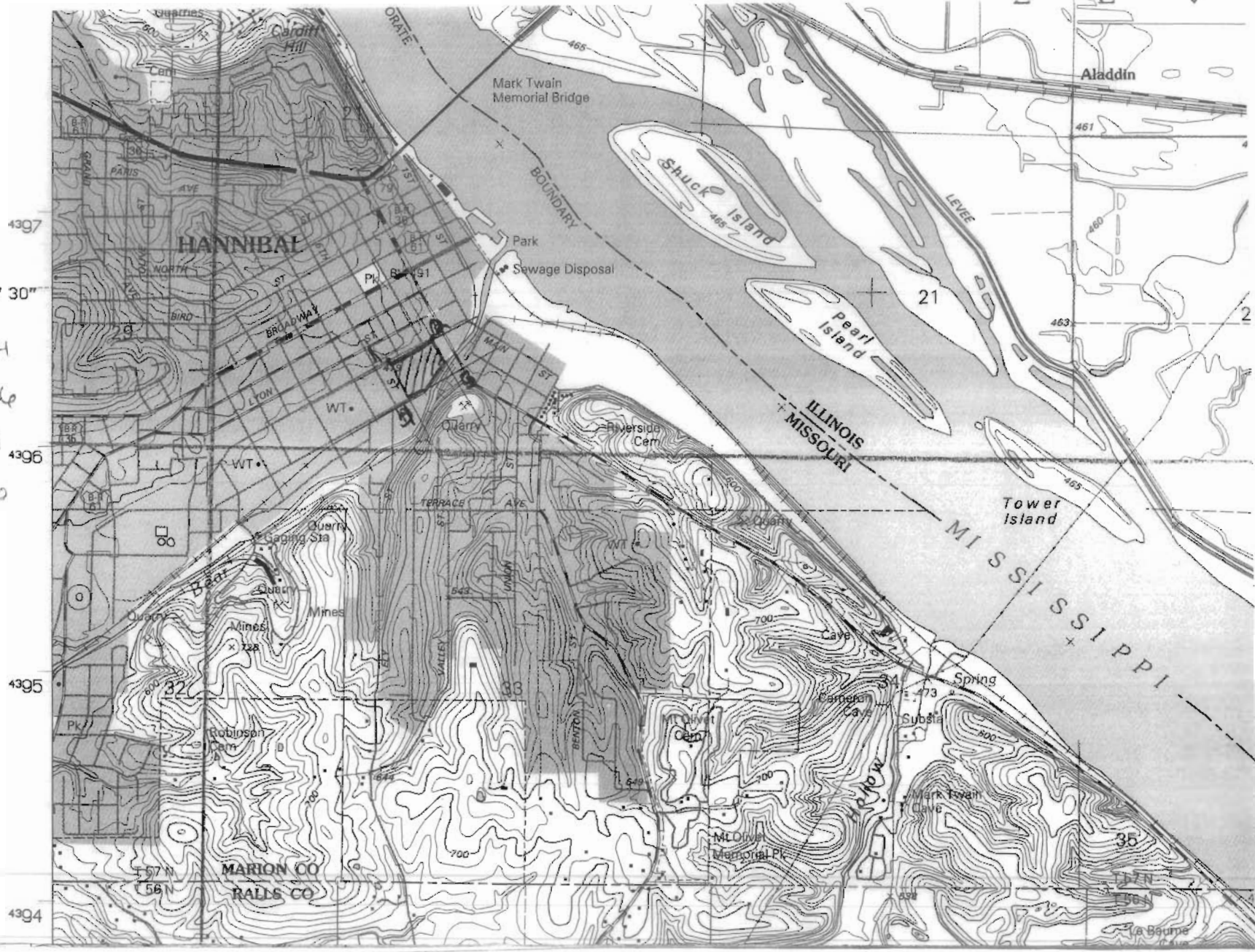


CLEMENS FIELD — HANNIBAL, MISSOURI

THE CRANE DESIGN GROUP INC.
ENGINEERS — ARCHITECTS — SURVEYORS
108 VIRGINIA STREET — SUITE 135
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JKW

Clemens Field
Marion County, MO
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Clemens Field, Marion County, MO



Clemens Field, Marion County, MO



Clemons Field, Marion County, MO



Marion County, MO, Genuens Field.



Clemens Field, Marion County, Mo



Clemens Field, Mason County, MO



Clemens Field, Macon County, MO



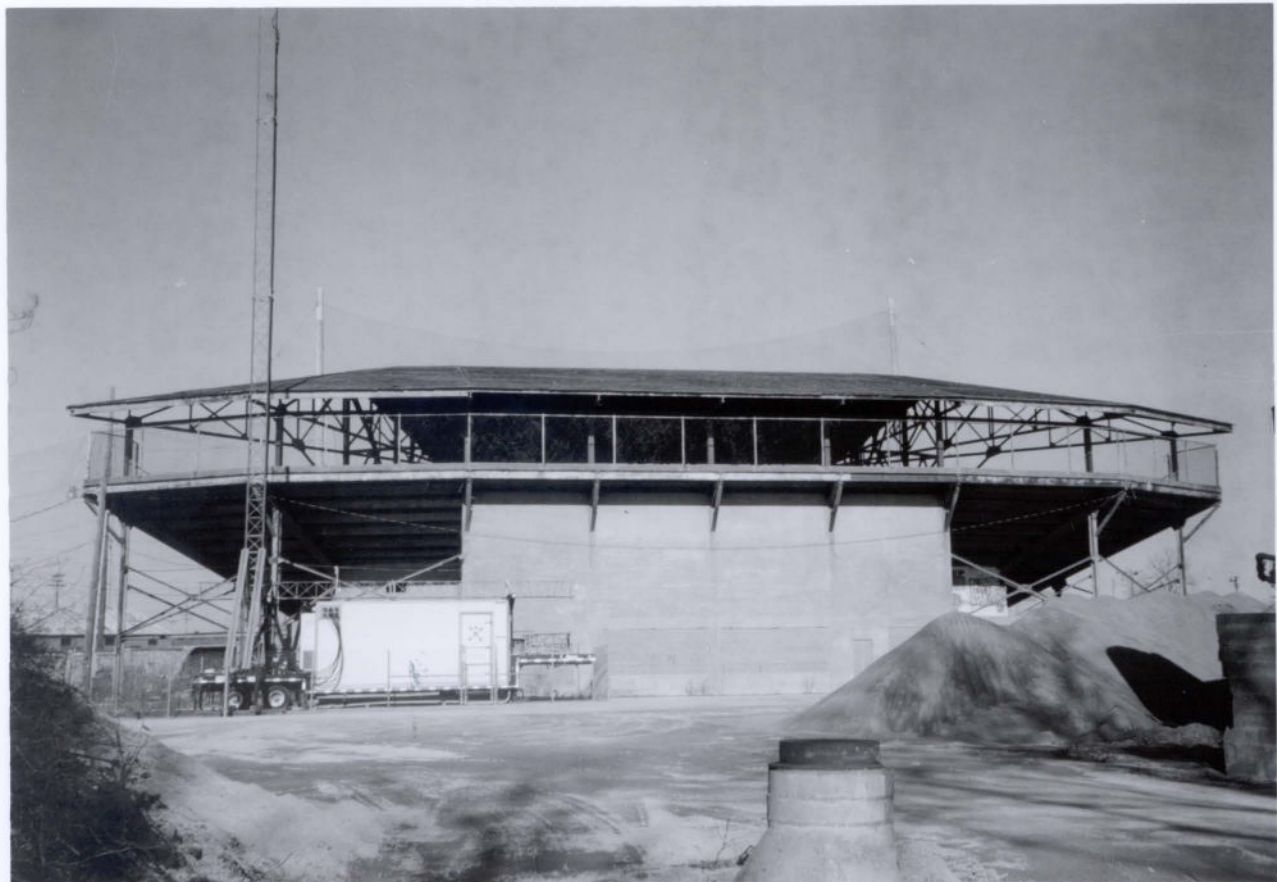
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Clemens Field, Marion County, MO



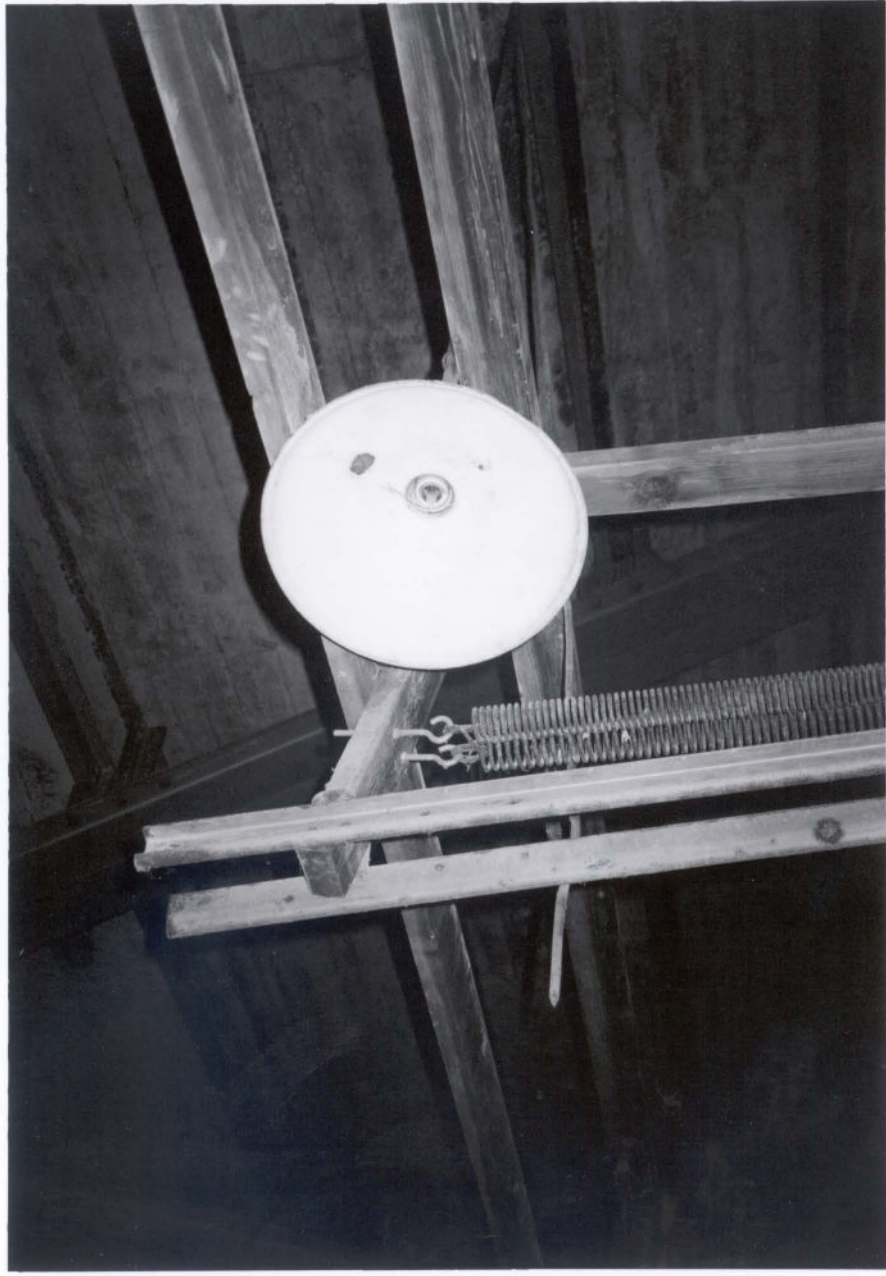
Clemens Field, Marion County, Mo



Clemens Field, Marion County, Missouri



Clemens Field, Mason County MO



Clemens Field, Marion County, MO



Clemens Field, Marion County, Mo



Clemens Field, Marion County, MO