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Annual Report for the Year Ending June 30, 1936

Kansas Frontier Historical Park

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KANSAS FRONTIER HISTORICAL PARK

HAYS, KANSAS

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Annual report for the year

ending June 30, 1936

Submitted to the
Chairman of the Board of Managers

by

F. L. Cunningham, Caretaker

990-06-05

BOARD OF MANAGERS

C. E. Rarick, Hays, Chairman C. M. Harger, Abilene
F. D. Farrell, Manhattan Kirke Meachem, Topeka
Mrs. F. W. Boyd, Phillipsburg

KANSAS FRONTIER HISTORICAL PARK

Hays, Kansas

December 15, 1936

To the Board of Managers,
Kansas Frontier Historical Park:

The following is the report of F. L. Cunningham, caretaker for the Kansas Frontier Historical Park, Hays, Kansas, for the year ending June 30, 1936.

Mr. Cunningham was employed as caretaker at the park by authority of the Board of Managers on July 10, 1935. He is a graduate of the Fort Hays Kansas State College. In addition to his training he has had considerable practical experience in plant life, and is well fitted for this position.

This report is not detailed, as you will notice. The plan is to present a biennial report two years hence. This will contain itemized and detailed statements of the activities within the park for the regular biennial period.

The year covered by this report represents the period of time for which an appropriation from the state has been available for the maintenance of the park. We believe this report contains sufficient information concerning the use of the appropriation during the past year to answer any question that may arise.

Respectfully submitted,

C. E. Rarick, Chairman

REPORT

Dr. C. E. Rarick, Chairman
State Park Board of Managers
Hays, Kansas

Dear Sir:

The following is the report of the caretaker of the Kansas Frontier Historical Park for the year ending, June 30, 1936.

This short introduction is presented in order that it might be of some practical value to readers who may not be acquainted with the specific location, size, condition, and other pertinent facts relative to the park. The Kansas Frontier Historical Park is an area of approximately two hundred acres, situated on the abandoned Fort Hays Military Reservation, south of Hays, Kansas. Most of this tract lies adjacent to Big Creek, a valuable stream of dependable water supply, and supports a fine natural growth of trees and shrubs, which facts alone render it one of the finest territories for park development in Kansas; which coupled with its central location and easy accessibility make it highly desirable that this area continue to be developed for the use of the people of Kansas. During the year of 1933 a Civilian Conservation Camp, under the auspices of the United States Department of the Interior, through the medium of the National Park Service, was stationed in the park for the purpose of developing these natural resources. An expenditure of approximately one-fourth million dollars was made by the federal government through this agency. The park, and incidently the state of Kansas, was enriched by many improvements. Notable among these are: Two concrete dams capable of impounding eight hundred twenty-five thousand cubic feet of water; one suspension bridge over the creek at the foot of the largest dam, two hundred feet long and containing a span of over one hundred feet; several miles of gravel drives some of which are not included within

the present boundaries of the park; two wells with hand pumps on native stone sites; three tennis courts; a number of rustic shelter houses, fences, and pergolas; eight stone ovens and a number of picnic tables; eight large stone road markers; gravelled bridle paths along the stream; and a rustic log cabin which is used as a residence for the present caretaker. Also included within the boundaries of the park is the site of the old Fort Hays Military Post on which still stand the native stone Blockhouse and Guardhouse, and the location of many of the other buildings are still apparent. The area surrounding these buildings has been transformed into beautiful golf greens, and this course is rated highly among those in this section. The golf grounds and buildings are at present leased to the Fort Hays Country Club, a Hays civic organization.

After the Federal Government had transferred its Civilian Conservation Corps Camp from the park in the summer of 1934, there elapsed a period of one year before the State Legislature of Kansas made funds available for the maintenance of the many improvements therein. In July 1935 the sum of four thousand dollars became available for the upkeep of the park for the following biennium. The park employees beginning duty in July 1935 consisted of caretaker, patrolman, and two attendants. Those men were confronted with the gigantic task of repairing damages to park property caused by the combined effects of a disastrous flood in 1934 and the depredations of vandals and irresponsible persons during the year the park was without protection and supervision. Practically every structure in the park was damaged to some extent, and the creek when subsiding from the flood stage left from one to six feet of silt upon the flooded areas, partially covering tables, seats, and ovens, and leaving also large quantities of debris and brush at various places along and within its channel. The greater part of the year was utilized in these repair and clean-up tasks. During the winter as more time became

available for other than emergency projects roads were graded and improved; additional drives were laid out and opened; parking spaces were provided for cars; recreational and picnic areas were segregated and restricted to car traffic by means of short posts salvaged from dead trees which were grubbed out during this period. In the spring the tennis courts were cleaned and made ready for use; bridle paths were regraded; dams were repaired; trees pruned; creek channel cleared; many evergreen and deciduous trees planted; a forest nursery started with seedling trees secured from the United States Forest Service; and the park weeded and cleaned in general. About this time construction was started on the new bridge over Big Creek on Highway number 1, which necessitated the changing of the park entrance ways and the laying out of new drives to conform thereto. This entrance is to be attractively planted and landscaped and in several ways will be more suitable than the original entrance, and part of the planting is in place at this time.

During the summer the suspension bridge, the rest rooms, all the picnic tables and other facilities were repainted and repaired. The east dam again needed attention and was rather extensively repaired. Wing-walls ten feet long and from six to eight feet in height were constructed on either side of the dam, under the surface of the ground, in order to stop the action of the water in eroding around the sides of the dam, the imitation stones or boulders on the dam were repaired or replaced where needed with concrete and a culvert was constructed through the dam for purpose of draining when needed, as well as to comply with state laws requiring fish chutes through dams. The many trees removed by the company engaged in constructing the highway bridge were cut up and piled for future use in constructing rustic fences, shelter houses, etc. Two croquet courts were constructed and horseshoe pits were laid out. In addition the routine labors of the park were performed and the best possible service offered to visitors and tourists. Personnel of the park during the summer consisted of the caretaker, who also performed the duties of patrolman, and three attendants.

The long continued drought starting in 1934 and continuing to 1936 has caused a large casualty among the trees of the park, particularly those on higher ground, and many trees not killed outright have been so weakened that they have become easy prey to boring insects and disease. The ones actually dead or nearly so are being removed as rapidly as possible and the lesser infested ones are being treated to remove insects and decay.

It is noticeable that no large projects involving much labor, machinery or money have been attempted, and it is equally apparent that the present appropriation will not permit any such expenditures. It is also true that certain repair work of extensive nature has been left undone because of insufficient funds. This is particularly applicable to the condition of the retaining wall about the impounded water at the head of the larger or west dam. This wall is of native stone and has been badly eroded at the water line.

Application has been made to the Works Progress Administration for park projects but as yet no additional federal funds have been granted.

Within the next biennium it is hoped that additional funds will be available so that a number of badly needed items may be secured. A few of the most needed are: 1. A combination tool and office building preferably of native stone. At present tools are kept wherever the caretaker may impose on the good graces of the State College authorities for enough space to store them. This arrangement is not particularly satisfactory to either party concerned. 2. While an underground irrigation system would be highly desirable it is felt that other things are needed worse, and in lieu thereof a portable pump, water wagon and sufficient hose for attachments is positively necessary if trees and shrubs are to be planted and properly cared for, or if flower beds or lawn grasses are to be considered. 3. A motor vehicle of the pick-up type is badly needed in carrying out routine duties. 4. A residence for the caretaker of the park

is urgently needed. The cabin is neither tight nor modern and was built originally more as a curiosity and hobby than as a residence.

It is with these and other desirable improvements in mind for better serving the people of Kansas that the legislature is asked to grant funds to the amount of ten thousand five hundred dollars (\$10,500) for the next biennium for the maintenance and improvement of the Kansas Frontier Historical Park. That money invested in this park is wisely spent is amply proven by the crowds of people that daily take advantage of the facilities for recreation, rest, or picnicking, during the park season. The present developed area is far too small to serve satisfactorily the crowds on Sundays and holidays especially, and it is hoped that funds will be available to allow further development of other desirable areas, and that these may be opened for public use, within the next biennium. Items (2) and (3) above are especially necessary to such improvements.

This is the only state park in this section of Kansas and it serves a large territory, populated by a class of people who appreciate a park and a wooded area. It is adjacent to a national cross country highway--Federal highway 40 south; and Kansas highway number 1 runs directly through it. Many travelers and tourists from other states take advantage of its restful condition, and stop to prepare a meal or rest for a few hours in the midst of their journeys. Cars from practically every state in the union were noted in the park this preceding summer, as well as from Alaska and Washington D. C.

It is with the hope that the Kansas Frontier Historical Park will continue to grow, improve, and better serve its masters, the people of Kansas, that this report is submitted along with the attached budget for the 1937-38 biennium, and it is also hoped and strongly urged that this report and budget receive favorable attention from the Board of Managers, and the members of the Legislature.

Respectfully submitted,

F. L. Cunningham, Caretaker

Financial report for the year
1935-36

Appropriations:

Salaries and Wages	\$1,500.00
Maintenance	400.00
Board of Managers Expense	100.00

\$2,000.00

Expenditures:

Salaries and Wages	1,500.00
Maintenance-	
Tools	56.80
Materials	115.39
Labor	227.78
Expense Board of Managers	78.09

\$1,978.06

Balance on hand July 1, 1936 \$21.94

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Appropriation requested for the biennium 1938-39

	1938	1939
Salaries and Wages	\$2,200.00	\$2,200.00
Maintenance and Repairs	1,200.00	1,200.00
Expense Board of Managers	100.00	100.00
Repair for blockhouse	500.00	
Cottage for caretaker	1,500.00	1,500.00

\$5,500.00 \$5,000.00