



## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor

recreation

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: outdoor

recreation

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th AND 20th CENTURY AMERICAN  
MOVEMENTS

OTHER: rustic

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: sandstone

walls STONE: sandstone

WOOD

roof ASPHALT

other OTHER: wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

## SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Front Royal Recreational Park is located off State Route 522 at the terminus of County Route 655, 1.1 mile from the community of Riverton near the town of Front Royal, the county seat of Warren County, Virginia. Given to the people of Front Royal and Warren County by Riverton residents Agnes H. and William E. Carson in 1933, the land on which the park was built consisted of sixty-three acres of land along the west bank of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River. The park was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps and opened in 1938. For a small fee, the park offered visitors use of its clubhouse, nine-hole golf course, two tennis courts and swimming pool. Two shelters shaded golfers from the sun, and a greenskeeper's cottage and garage were built to help maintain the park. Now named the Front Royal Country Club, the park retains much of its original character. Land added to the park over the years has enlarged it to 109 acres. Exterior and interior portions of the clubhouse have been renovated. The tennis courts are no longer used. Floodwaters from the Shenandoah River have inundated the clubhouse several times, the worst in 1949; the most recent in 1972 and 1986.

The complex currently consists of the clubhouse, garage, and greenskeeper's house, the golf course, the tennis courts, swimming pool, and original shelter, as well as a stone drinking fountain and a stone marker honoring the memory of the Carsons' son. Noncontributing resources include three golfcart sheds, a cemetery that predates the park, and a reconstructed shelter on the site of one of the original shelters.

## ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

### The Clubhouse:

The clubhouse measures 102 x 77 feet. Its interior spaces range in use from a formal ballroom to a snack bar. The south section, used only for special functions, contains formal space. It is built of load-bearing cut quarry-face sandstone. The north section, wood-frame sheathed in rough-sawn siding, is used for everyday activities.

The formal section is one story on a raised sandstone basement. The largest room is the ballroom, which measures 47 x 25 feet. Adjoining the ballroom to the south are the bar, kitchen, and foyer. The second story of the south wing of the formal section contains an attic.

See continuation sheet

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance

1935-1938

Significant Date

1935

1938

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Carson, William Edward

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The Front Royal Recreation Park is being nominated under Criterion A for its association with the Civilian Conservation Corps as a Depression-era recreation project. The park was the inspiration of William E. Carson, who was the first director of the Virginia Conservation and Development Commission, one of the key figures behind Shenandoah National Park, and was instrumental in founding the system of state parks throughout Virginia.<sup>1</sup> In the last years of the Depression, Carson saw a need for recreational facilities for the young people of Front Royal and Warren County, and sought help through the federal work programs of the New Deal.<sup>2</sup> Carson, who was also the owner of the Riverton Lime and Stone Co. Inc.'s quarry adjoining the park to the south, was able to arrange for the Civilian Conservation Corps to build Front Royal Recreational Park.<sup>3</sup> On June 22, 1938, William E. and Agnes H. Carson transferred ownership of 63 acres of land, upon which construction of the park was well underway, to the Front Royal Recreational Center Corporation.<sup>4</sup> The park opened to the public on August 6, 1938. The park is important locally and to the Commonwealth of Virginia as an example of a Depression-era recreation project made possible by the New Deal's work programs and by the leading figure in the establishment of Virginia's state park system.<sup>5</sup>

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Before the Carsons acquired it, the land that Front Royal Recreational Park now occupies had been owned since 1792 by the Hand and Ash families. Agnes H. Carson acquired 212 acres in 1935. Three years later the Carsons donated 63 acres to the Front Royal Recreational Center Corporation<sup>6</sup> and dedicated the park in memory of their only son, William E. Carson, Jr., who had died of pneumonia at age seventeen in 1925.<sup>7</sup> The park has served Front Royal and Warren County continuously since its opening in 1938.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources  
221 Governor St., Richmond, VA 23219

**10. Geographical Data**

Acres of property 63

UTM References

A	1,7	74,317,60	431,580,5
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C	1,7	74,411,9	431,612,0

B	1,7	74,386,0	431,620,0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D	1,7	74,412,0	431,560,5

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the polygon whose vertices are marked by the following UTM reference points: A 17 743760 4315805, B 17 743860 4316200, C 17 744119 4316120, D 17 744120 4315605, E 17 743900 4315505.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated property was chosen to include the original 63 acres of the park.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Elsa W. L. Schemmer/student

organization Mary Washington College

street & number 309 Colonial Avenue

city or town Falmouth

date 12-14-90

telephone (703) 373-1672

state VA

zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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The formal section retains most of its original fabric on the interior as well as the exterior. Exterior walls rise one story to support framed gable ends. The ballroom floor is two-inch-wide oak. Splices have been added where floorboards shrank after floodwaters receded. The roof, covered with composition shingle, is interrupted on its west and east slopes by shed-roofed dormers. Each dormer contains a panel of three six-light hopper windows. The ballroom chimney stack is located at the intersection of the south-wing roof and the ballroom roof.

The majority of the windows in the formal section are six-over-six double-hung sash. The doors vary throughout from one-light to six-panel types. The double doors in the west end of the ballroom have twelve lights each. The east end wall of the ballroom contains five nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows, which afford a view of the river and golf course.

Five-foot dado paneling capped by two-inch-wide chair rail line the walls of the ballroom and the bar. Vinyl wallpaper covers the wall above the dado paneling.

A stone fireplace projects from the center of the south wall in the ballroom. The chimney stack is exposed until it penetrates the roof. The roof framing is exposed the full length of the ballroom. Trusses joined with iron plates and bolts cap the ballroom's stone walls.

The informal section of the clubhouse is one story, housing the snack bar, the bathrooms, the ladies' lounge, and bathhouses. Its south wall joins the formal section. Its north end faces the swimming pool. Some decorative elements and fenestration in the section's central portion have been changed. Information available at the time of this nomination suggests that the floor plan is probably original, however, all exterior doors in the informal section have been replaced. Interior doors in this section are simpler in decorative detail than the ones in the formal section.

The informal section's hopper windows are original except for those in the east elevation of the central portion. Many changes have been made to the east elevation. Aluminum-framed windows and sliding glass doors have replaced originals. Information on the appearance of these windows and doors is not available at this time.

Bathhouses are little changed and the dressing stalls are original. To dissipate moisture, the builders installed vented wall panels below the windows. North-facing walls, however, are rotting because of their orientation and because the bathhouses are damp. Some damaged vents have been replaced with plywood coverings.

A flagstone patio extends beyond the east elevation of the clubhouse. Raised, it curves outward from the northeast corner of the ballroom wall and intersects with the southeast corner of a bathhouse wall. Steps lead from the patio to the grounds. The same flagstone material paves

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the foyer landings on the exterior of the south and north ends of the clubhouse. A cut-sandstone retaining wall lines a stair-well that accesses the basement from the exterior of the south kitchen wall of the formal wing.

The Outbuildings and Grounds (see site plan):

Stretching from the river bank to the entrance road, the golf course surrounds the clubhouse to the north, east, and west. The Norfolk and Southern Railroad track divides the course in half from south to north. A dirt road crosses the track midway along the length of the course allowing patrons access to both sections.

The garage and greenskeeper's house stand on higher ground, about a quarter of a mile west of the clubhouse. The one-story garage is probably the least changed of the park buildings. The east section of the garage contains a service bay. The smaller west section contains an office, which was once heated by a wood stove connected to the limestone chimney stack that rises between the two sections. Though not yet constructed at the time the U. S. D. A. aerial photograph was taken in 1936, the construction materials of this building coincide with the clubhouse. It is in poor condition.

The greenskeeper's cottage is used now as rental property. As does the garage, its construction and materials echo those of the clubhouse. It contains a kitchen, pantry, living room, bathroom, and two bedrooms. Another bedroom was added by enclosing about one third of the northeast porch. It contains a brick central chimney.

Other contributing structures within the nominated property include a golf shelter, tennis court, and swimming pool. The shelter, which stands about a half mile north of the clubhouse, is now abandoned. It appears to be original and is also in poor condition. Dug into the south and east sides of a hill overlooking the clubhouse, the now-abandoned tennis courts have retaining walls made of the same stone used in the clubhouse. The swimming pool has been cosmetically renovated, but retains its original shape, size and orientation to the clubhouse.

A monument to William and Agnes Carson's son stands just to the south of the tennis courts and to the southwest of the clubhouse and pool, at the west end of the parking lot. It is made of a large natural piece of limestone with a bronze plaque dedicating the park to the memory of the Carsons' only son, William E. Carson, Jr., who had died of pneumonia at age 17 in 1925. A stone drinking fountain, now inoperable, located near the parking lot and adjacent to the tennis courts, is the other contributing object.

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### Noncontributing Buildings and Structures:

A second shelter is approximately one-half mile north of the greenskeeper's cottage, on the northwest section of the course. It is still used by golfers seeking shade. This shelter, which received a new roof in 1988, has been extensively reconstructed over the years to the point that little original material remains, although in form, it remains true to the original. The shelter affords a scenic view of the park and distant mountains.

Three golf-cart sheds, built successively between 1960 and 1975, stand on the hill behind the tennis courts.

The Hand/Ash family cemetery is about a quarter mile south of the abandoned shelter. The cemetery is overgrown with trees and shrubs and pitted with groundhog borrows and is not maintained. A dry-laid limestone wall surrounding the graveyard is in good condition except on the south side, where stones have been removed.

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Work began on the Front Royal Recreational Park in mid-August 1935. It is probable that at least two different CCC camps were involved in the construction of the park. Fifty men from the Harmony Hollow CCC camp, S.N.P. 4, Co. 1398 (SNP4), which was about four miles south of the park site, worked on the park, according to an August 22, 1935, article in the Warren Sentinel. The newspaper reported, "the men are engaged in building a road entrance ... [and] cleaning up the right of way and grounds, and are working also on the fairways for the golf course."<sup>8</sup> James Meigs, superintendent of Harmony Hollow, was in charge of construction. Camp inspection reports do not mention this assignment being given to SNP4.

CCC Camp P-66 is listed officially as having gotten the assignment of building Front Royal Recreational Park. The March 1936 inspection report for Camp P-66, Co. 2342 (P66), known to locals as the Dismal Hollow camp, listed one of its assignments as "work on the Front Royal Recreational Park."<sup>9</sup> It is possible that the Harmony Hollow camp joined in the development of the park later, but was never mentioned in newspaper accounts. Some Front Royal residents, including retired Warren County Circuit Court Judge Elliott Marshall, remember Dismal Hollow men as the park's builders,<sup>10</sup> but no surviving member of that camp has been found.

As progress was made on construction of the park, Front Royal residents waited. The April 8, 1937, Warren Sentinel reported that work went slowly, but as time went on, the park began to take shape. "Despite the bad weather Monday, many visited Front Royal's new recreation park," the paper reported. The CCC had completed the park's picnic grounds, golf course, swimming pool and tennis courts, and had almost completed a foot bridge across Crooked Run to the picnic grounds by August 1. But the Warren Sentinel reported that the park's board of governors decided they would not "open any facilities of the park until all was more nearly finished." On June 24, 1937, the Sentinel reported the cost of construction as "something like \$72,000" for 15,382 man hours, valued at \$38,444, and construction materials totaling \$34,338.15. "Only the excavation for the clubhouse is done," the story stated. A U.S. Department of Agriculture aerial photograph taken of the Front Royal area on October 31, 1936, shows the clubhouse still under construction, with only its foundation visible and the completed pool to the north. The golf course is barely discernible and no garage or greenskeeper's house yet exists.<sup>11</sup>

The project was completed and opened to public use on August 6, 1938, nearly three years after construction began. In a ceremony at the park that day, Carson presented a deed for the tract to G. Tyler Miller, who represented the non-profit corporation that would operate the park.<sup>12</sup> The deed of donation lists the hundred board members of the Front Royal Recreational Center Corporation. This list includes citizens of Front Royal and Warren County--both men and woman, black and white.<sup>13</sup> According to Judge Marshall, an original member of the park board, Carson put this clause in the deed because he believed the park should serve all the people of the area.<sup>14</sup>



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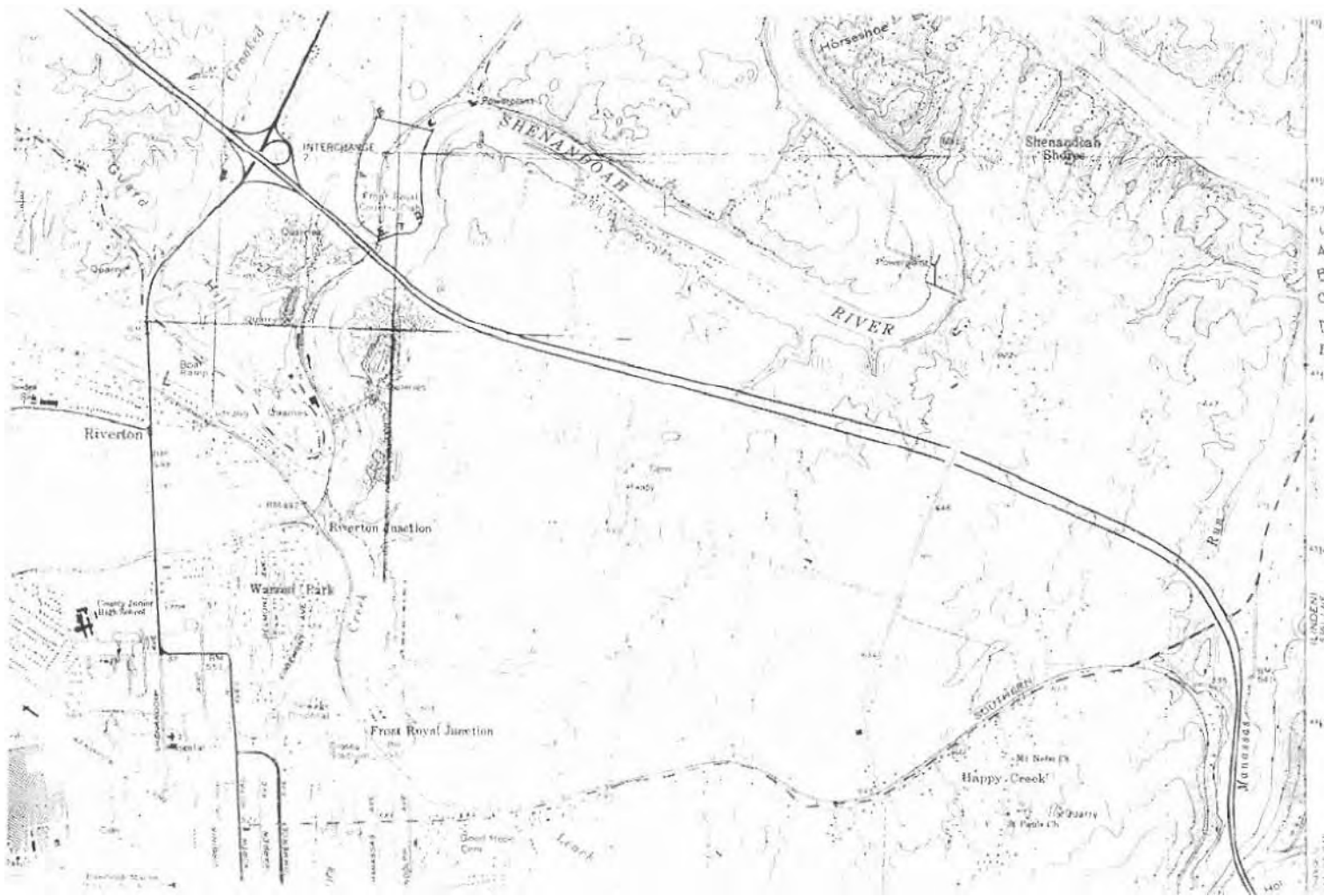
When the park opened on a limited basis, with only the pool and the tennis courts operating, passes for the remainder of the summer cost \$2 for the tennis courts and \$1.50 for the swimming pool.<sup>15</sup> The Warren Sentinel reported on August 28, 1938, that "[e]lectric lights have been installed at the swimming pool" and the board of governors had fixed "the fee [at] 25 [cents] for each nine holes played on the golf course."

Remembering his first game of golf at Front Royal Recreational Park, Judge Marshall said, "They had sand greens. They didn't build [grass] greens until later, maybe two or three years. In order to keep the dust down, they put tar oil on them."<sup>16</sup>

Front Royal Recreational Park, although it has been renamed Front Royal Country Club, continues to operate on a non-profit basis and according to its original principals to serve the citizens of Front Royal and Warren County. <sup>1ea</sup>

## ENDNOTES

1. John F. Foran, Jr., "Will Carson and the Virginia Conservation Commission, 1926-1934," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, October 1984, p. 392.
2. Ibid., pp. 397, 403-404.
3. "Carson Lauded At Transfer Of Front Royal Park Deeds," Northern Virginia Daily, 7 July 1938.
4. Ibid.
- Submitted to 5. Lorraine U. Jackson, Treasurer, Front Royal Country Club, "Preliminary Information Request on Front Royal Country Club," Virginia Department of Conservation and Historic Resources, Division of Historic Landmarks, Richmond, Va., 22 June 1989.
6. Deed Book 3, pages 197 and 227, Warren County Courthouse.
7. "W.E. CARSON, JR., 16, DIES AT HOME FROM PNEUMONIA," Winchester Daily Independent, 19 January 1925.
8. "C. C. C. YOUTHS START WORK ON RECREATION PARK," Warren Sentinel, 22 August 1935.
- 23 March 1936 9. "Emergency Conservation Work, Camp Inspection Report for Company No. 2342, Camp No. P-66," Camp Name Front Royal, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
10. Elliott Marshall, Interview, Front Royal, Va. 5 October 1990.
11. U.S. Department of Agriculture, quadrant FG 163 184. 31 October 1937. photograph.
12. Jackson, "Preliminary Information Request."
13. Marshall interview.
14. Ibid.
15. "Season Passes Offered For Court And Pool," Warren Sentinel, 15 July 1937.
16. Marshall interview.



FRONT ROYAL  
RECREATIONAL PARK  
57°30' WASHINGTON COUNTY  
UTM REFERENCES  
A: 17 | 743760 | 4315805  
B: 17 | 743860 | 4316200  
C: 17 | 744200 | 4316140  
D: 17 | 744120 | 4315605  
E: 17 | 743900 | 4315510