



“What’s This Thing?”

Discovering Remaining Artifacts from “Kern River Park”

The trail is approx. 3.25 miles or 7,000 steps

1. IRRIGATION STANDPIPES - First installed in 1929 and expanded in the 1930s, dozens of these standpipes were part of the flood irrigation system.

A large reservoir at the top of Hill Road collected water from a nearby spring, and the river allowed the water level to be high enough off the ground to provide the pressure needed to flood-irrigate the entire park.



2. BASEBALL FIELD - The ball field and parking lot saw its peak use in the 1930s, but was still enjoyed by scores of picnickers over the last 100 years. Only the chain-link backstop and a few very old trees remain.

3. THE WATER WHEEL - This 1700s Italian-style water wheel was originally constructed in 1932 by SERA, a depression-era work program. It primarily pumped water but sometimes generated electricity using the generator that once was visible inside. After sustaining damage from heavy floods in 1937, the structure was rebuilt by the WPA.



4. DRINKING WATER FILTER - Until 1966, the drinking water was supplied from a sulphur well at the west end of the park that smelled of rotten eggs. The installation of a pressure sand and chemical filter, located on this site, provided a clean and refreshing drink at the rate of 150 gallons per minute.

5. OLD WATERGATE - This cobblestone water gate was used to control the flow of river water that ran into the canal to Hart Lake. The horse trail and bike trail cross the intake canal over this bridge.

6. THE OLD BARN - Built in 1933, the barn housed the small

equines that served the Pony Ride concession on Pleasure Island as well as feed for other animals in the park. In the late 1990s, John Husted, a dedicated local horseman and building contractor, with other riding enthusiasts, volunteers, and donors created “Horseman’s Park” and is still in use today.



7. WILDCAT ARTESIAN WELL - Three exploratory wells were drilled in an attempt to find oil. All that was found was a natural flow of sulfur mineral water. The sulfur water at this site ran into a series of pools, and eventually into bath houses where people bathed in the water for their

health. The flow from this failed oil venture would soon become the first attraction at the “Peoples Playground.”

8. ROCK TOWER & FOUNTAIN - Dedicated in 1929, the “stone gazebo” is one of the oldest structures in Hart Park and is in desperate need of restoration. It was once fed by a sulphur mineral spring. A short distance NE from the gazebo, was a wooden water tower that provided drinking water to the nearby residences. The concrete pad is all that remains of the water filter house.



9. POOL & IRRIGATION - These stone pillars and wall mark the entrance to the boat lake/



Hart Memorial Park
Kern County, California

L. TURNER

reservoir/swimming pool. Each day after the park closed, the pool water would be drained to flood and irrigate surrounding areas of the park. The sand bottom swimming area of the reservoir was completed by the grand opening in May 1929. This section was converted to a concrete plunge in 1935. In 1992, the plunge was filled in. It is now the parking for the maintenance yard.



10. JOHN O. HART MONUMENT STONE - Originally named Kern River Park, Hart Memorial Park was rededicated in 1947 to honor Hart, Kern County Supervisor from 1910-1934. From the "Pleasure Grounds" beginning in 1921 through Hart's untimely death in 1934, no one championed this "Peoples Playground" more vigorously than "Johnnie Hart." Three years after John Oliver Hart passed away in 1934, many people thought



that more should be done to recognize all that he had done for this park. Hart had planned to move the sculptured stone from the canyon to the park for many years but never found the time. On Labor Day, September 6, 1937, a public gala picnic was held to honor the late supervisor. The granite boulder with the memorial plaque was placed near the swimming pool in the center of the park.

11. EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT - This bridge was re-built in 1998 as an Eagle Scout project supervised by Boy Scout Jeff Barker. All of the posts and bolts were donated. The post holes were dug by the Scout troop that helped with this project.

12. CAMP FIRE GIRLS FIRE-PLACE - Originally installed for the Camp Fire Girls in 1934, this river stone ring was a popular camping site for several scouting groups over several decades.



13. BOATING LAKE - The early 1930s saw the beginning of excavation for this soon to be famous water attraction. This boating lake was dug with hand shovels by workers under the State Emergency Relief Administration. History was made and records were broken in the 1950s. As boats got faster, it became too dangerous to race in this small area, so Lake Ming was built in 1959.

14. ARTESIAN SULPHUR WELL (WEST) - Just outside the gate, on the nearby foothill, you will see a capped artesian sulphur well. This is the only well, of the three wildcat wells, where the water flow is still visible in Hart Park. In the winter you can still see steam rise from the side of Alfred Harrell Hwy.



15. WEST ENTRANCE - This 1930s era stone entry gate welcomed scores of visitors to The People's Playground each

year. Until 1957, traffic from Alfred Harrell Boulevard funneled through the center gate at a single point.



16. CONCRETE BRIDGE & SPILLWAY - As with most of the construction projects in the park of this era, the balustrade, bridge, and spillway work was constructed with SERA and WPA labor. The excess waters from the lake returned to the river under a reinforced concrete arch.

17. TURTLES - Once a group of five, these Jim Miller-Melberg designed concrete play sculptures were installed in Hart Park sometime in the 1960s.

18. BARBECUES & PITS - In 1936, The Kern County Fish & Game Protective Association installed the BBQ pits for their annual fundraiser, which lasted until 1971. Preparations to feed the crowd took two days. The 1958 BBQ would feed 12,000. Fourteen cords of wood was needed to pit-cook 7,500 lbs of meat, 50 gallons of chili sauce, 800 lbs of beans, 150 lbs of bacon, 300 crates of lettuce, 100 lbs of onions, 4 crates of celery, 100 bunches of radishes, and gallons of salad oil and vinegar. The price? \$1.50 per person. If you look closely, you will see the last trace of the miniature train that once traveled through "Pleasure Island."



19. GAME BIRD ADOBE - From 1932 through the 1970s, the Kern County Fish and Game

Protective Association raised tens of thousands of game birds right here in Hart Park. In 1957-58 alone, the KCFGPA raised several thousand Japanese quail, 1,500 valley quail, 1,200 pheasants, and 2,000 chukkers.



20. ADOBE "PEACOCK HOUSE" - Built in 1939 and designed by W. Francis Parsons the adobe was historically renovated in 2023. The "Ranger House" is one of many adobe buildings constructed with federal WPA funds during the 1930s-1940s. Park Employees and concessionaires lived in several buildings located throughout the park.



Trail Guide available at:
Kern River Parkway Foundation
NATURE CENTER
8000 River Road
Hart Memorial Park
Bakersfield, CA 93308



KernNatureCenter.org

LAURA TURNER