

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Sent to DC - 12/16/87

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Taylorville Chautauqua Auditorium

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Manners Park _____ not for publication

city, town Taylorville _____ vicinity of

state Illinois code 012 county Christian code 021

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Taylorville Community Pleasure Driveway and Park District

street & number Manners Park

city, town Taylorville _____ vicinity of state Illinois

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Christian County Courthouse, County Clerk Office

street & number Taylorville

city, town Taylorville _____ state Illinois

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Illinois Historic Structures Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date October 1973 _____ federal state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

city, town Old State Capitol, Springfield _____ state Illinois

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site	1916
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Taylorville Chautauqua Auditorium is located in the West central section of Manners Park. It is a sixteen sided wooden auditorium with a steel truss roof support system. The main roof is octahedral with a smaller octahedral cupola above. Each side is 25 feet 6 inches and in every fourth wall is a set of swing out barn type doors. One of these have since been replaced with a modern over head garage type door. Eleven of the walls have a row of 8 windows above swing up panels and below the roof edge. Each window has 9 panes, 3 panes high and 3 panes long. Two of the sides have attached dressing rooms with a basement. The dressing room area measures 25 feet wide and 50 feet in length. All 8 sides of the cupola have clerestory windows. All window openings have since been boarded up. The sides are single board width wooden walls. The roof and walls have deteriorated so that cracks and separations in the boards measure over three inches.

The roof is suspended by a series of steel truss triangles for strength. The triangular construction starts with a vertical center post that measures 10 1/2 inches by 12 inches. Roof rafters are anchored to the center post and extend outward to the outside wall. The horizontal leg of the triangle is attached approximately 12 1/2 feet up the center post and consists of a 4 1/2 inch steel beam that extend outward to the walls. This is repeated 8 times at approximately 45° spacing around the building. A series of smaller triangles divides the larger triangles. Between each triangle is a 4 foot truss that runs from a wall pillar to one of eight 10 inch beams that make up the support system for the cupola above the main roof. The structure is 130 feet in diameter and is a clear span from wall to wall with only one supporting pillar in the interior of the building. The roof sheeting boards are placed diagonally from one roof rafter to the next, and in the next section they are diagonally reversed forming a fish tail effect to add side strength to the roof.

The unusual and unique method of suspending the roof of this building in the year 1916 reflects the ingenuity of the builders. The ingenuity in the construction is that this bridge type supporting structure was executed in a 360° circle radiating from a central hub and it was of sufficient strength to support a clear span structure for a distance of 130 feet. One can easily see how the nick name "the steel umbrella" applies.

The Decatur Bridge Company was founded in 1902 by G. A. Caldwell, T. D. Blackburn, E. B. Tyler and M. W. Wood. They were employees of Indiana Bridge Company in Muncie, Indiana, who stopped in Decatur to change trains, planning to visit sites in other cities. A deal promoted by the Chamber of Commerce persuaded them to locate in Decatur. At first engaged in the fabrication of iron bridges, the company later began manufacture of building beams

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and the name was changed to Mississippi Valley Structural Steel. It is now a division of Debron Corp., a contraction of the original name. Its first big order was for steel in the Wabash railway shops. Since then it has supplied steel girders for high-rise buildings across the nation. Branches are located in several Midwestern cities." ¹

The structure has been slightly altered since it was built. In the mid 40's a roller skating rink was built inside of wood. In 1954 the skating rink was taken out and a concrete floor, poured in a circular pattern was installed, and remains in excellent condition today. The 50 foot wide stage was covered with an acoustical band shell in 1955. The Taylorville Municipal band held only a few performances in the shell, because of the heat inside during summer months. The band shell remains in good condition today.

The building remains as one of the few reminders of the once popular Chautauqua movement from the late nineteenth century. Very few communities were able to construct assembly halls for this purpose.

¹Banton, O.T., History of Macon County 1976. Macon County Historical Society, Printed by Illinois Graphics, Bloomington, Il. Page 230

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1916-1928 **Builder/Architect** Decatur Bridge Co.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Chautauqua Auditorium located in Manners Park in Taylorville, Illinois, provided the place for the great movement which stimulated people from all walks of life in their desire to learn about subjects of vital interests, which might have been unavailable, otherwise. After the Chautauqua lessened in popularity, many of the buildings erected for that purpose were demolished. Ours remains and is a very important part of history for Taylorville, Christian County, Illinois. The building appears to have been moved from Streator to Taylorville in 1916. The move was prior to the period of significance, and therefore it does not affect the importance of the building in Taylorville.

The Chautauqua was a series of assemblies featuring a program of lectures and concerts designed to appeal to all ages. In the summer of 1874, two gentlemen of the Methodist persuasion started a camp at Fair Point on Chautauqua Lake in western New York State. John Heyl Vincent and Lewis Miller shared many ideas concerning the value of Sunday school instruction and the necessity for securing good teachers. A camp meeting site, in a place of natural beauty, seemed a good idea and thus Chautauqua Lake was chosen. The first assembly opened August 4, 1874 and continued for two weeks. In addition to instructional classes, there was an elaborate recreational program. This assembly was a great success and those who attended wanted to return again. The thirst for knowledge of this sort was overwhelming. In a short period of time nearly every community of any size in the United States had at least one person following the Chautauqua reading program (Chautauqua Library and Scientific Circle). Assemblies, sometimes called "little Chautauquas" began to spring up all over the Midwest.¹

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Taylorville Chautauqua Auditorium

The Chautauqua became popular in Christian County, Illinois, about 1900 when the first one was organized at Sharpsburg-Edinburg, followed soon by Morrisonville, Pana, Stonington and Taylorville. First held under canvas tents, the Chautauqua was later housed in auditoriums built for that purpose.²

The beginning of the Taylorville Chautauqua is described in the Daily Breeze of March 18, 1914, as follows: "That Taylorville will have a chautauqua was assured last evening when the Retail Merchants Association got behind the movement and took the initial step to contract with the Bloomington Cooperative Chautauqua Association for the purpose of bringing a strong program of talent here this summer. The dates for the chautauqua will be from August 23 to August 30 inclusive. About 75 were present at the meeting and much enthusiasm was shown. W.S. Scott, president of the merchants' group, appointed a committee of members and others to carry on the business of the chautauqua. This committee is composed of C.W. Morton, P.S. Haner, C.M. Parker, Melle Calloway, J.E. Hogan, R. Armstrong and H.L. Fowkes. The committee, when it convened, added two more members, W.S. Scott and Walter M. Provine."

The Taylorville Chautauqua opened at Manners Park August 23, 1914. The first program featured Kaffir Boy's Choir and Adam Bede, billed as "one of the best chautauqua lecturers in the field."

In the Spring of 1916, (May 13 edition of Daily Breeze), the Taylorville City Council and the chautauqua board found that a steel auditorium, built by

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Taylorville Chautauqua Auditorium

the Decatur Bridge Company, could be purchased from Streator, Illinois for \$5,000. It was brought here, disassembled, and was erected in the present location in time for the Chautauqua in August. The August 11th edition of the Daily Breeze announced that the "new steel umbrella" was nearing completion. As many as 1300 cars were parked on and near the grounds that year and extra street cars ran to take the citizens of Taylorville to special events.

Scores of outstanding musicians and vocalists delighted chautauqua audiences. Among them were the Swiss Bell Ringers and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The Symphony concert is remembered by two sisters, now retired school teachers, who as young girls sat in the front row applauding vigorously and after the performance were treated to ice cream cones by an orchestra member.

Persons of national prominence who addressed chautauqua audiences included William Howard Taft, evangelist Billy Sunday, Helen Keller and her teacher Anny Macy Sullivan, humorist, Irving S. Cobb, Sgt. Alvin York, hero of World War I; and William Jennings Bryan. One present at Mr. Bryan's lecture recalls that his subject was "The Prince of Peace." Sir Harry Lauder, noted Scottish singer and recording star, was possibly the most famous of the entertainers who appeared at the Taylorville Chautauqua. Many remember his brilliant performances.

The Chautauqua was held for eight days of every year starting August 23, 1914 and ending after the 1928 season. A letter, dated September 12, 1987, from a county resident who remembers the Chautauqua from her childhood, simply states what everyone felt, "Mother, my sisters, little brother and I would

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Taylorville Chautauqua Auditorium

hitch up the buggy and drive five miles over dusty roads to attend each afternoon session, then hurry home to do chores and wait for father to come in from the field and back to town we would go. We didn't want to miss any part of it." ³

At present, two other Chautauqua auditorium buildings in Illinois are listed in the National Register of Historic Places as contributing buildings in historic districts, the Shelbyville polygonal building and the rectangular auditorium at New Piasa Chautauqua. These are the only other known standing chautauqua auditoriums in Illinois. The Taylorville building is comparable in integrity to these other examples.

¹Gould, Joseph E., The Chautauqua Movement, New York, State University of New York, 1961.

²Drennan, Dorothy D. and Helen B. Broverman, ed., History of Christian County, 1880-1968, p. 63-65.

³Letter from Zelma Welch, dated September 12, 1987.

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Letter from Zelma Welch, dated September 12, 1987
Banton, O.T., History of Macon County 1976. Macon County
Historical Society, Printed by Illinois Graphics, Bloomington,
Il. Page 230

9. Major Bibliographical References

Gould, Joseph E., The Chautauqua Movement. New York State University of New York, 1961
History of Christian County, 1880-1968 p. 63-65 General Chairman, Thelma B. Gardner,
Edited by Dorothy D. Drennan and Helen B. Broverman Daily Breeze, (now Breeze Courier)
Christian County's only daily newspaper

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Taylorville, IL

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

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

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary line follows a line 15 feet from the exterior walls of the auditorium building.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert Morgan (Trustee-Chairman of Chautauqua Project)

organization Taylorville Community Pleasure Driveway and Park District date September 28, 1987

street & number 1323 North Webster telephone 217-824-8595

city or town Taylorville state Illinois 62568

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director date 12-15-87

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
P.O. BOX 37127
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20013-7127

IN REPLY REFER TO:

JAN 29 1988

The Director of the National Park Service is pleased to inform you that the following properties have been entered in the National Register of Historic Places beginning January 17, 1988 and ending January 23, 1988. For further information call (202) 343-9552.

STATE, County, Vicinity, Property, Address, (Date Listed)

ARIZONA, Yavapai County, Prescott, Kenwill Apartments (Prescott Territorial Buildings MRA), 119-127 E. Goodwin St. (01/21/88)

ARKANSAS, Lincoln County, Relfs Bluff, Mt. Zion Presbyterian Church, AR 81 (01/21/88)
ARKANSAS, Phillips County, Helena, Altman House, 1202 Perry St. (01/21/88)

CALIFORNIA, Los Angeles County, Hollywood, La Belle Tour, 6200 Franklin Ave. (01/22/88)
CALIFORNIA, San Francisco County, San Francisco, Russian Hill--Vallejo Street Crest District, Roughly 1020-1032 Broadway, 1-49 Florence, 1728-1742 Jones, 1-7 Russian Hill Pl., 1629-1715 Taylor, & 1000-1085 Vallejo (01/22/88)
CALIFORNIA, Santa Cruz County, Capitola, Old Riverview Historic District, Blue Gum Ave., Capitola Ave., Riverview Ave., Riverview Dr., and Wharf Rd. (01/22/88)

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, Washington, White--Meyer House, 1624 Crescent Pl., NW (01/20/88)

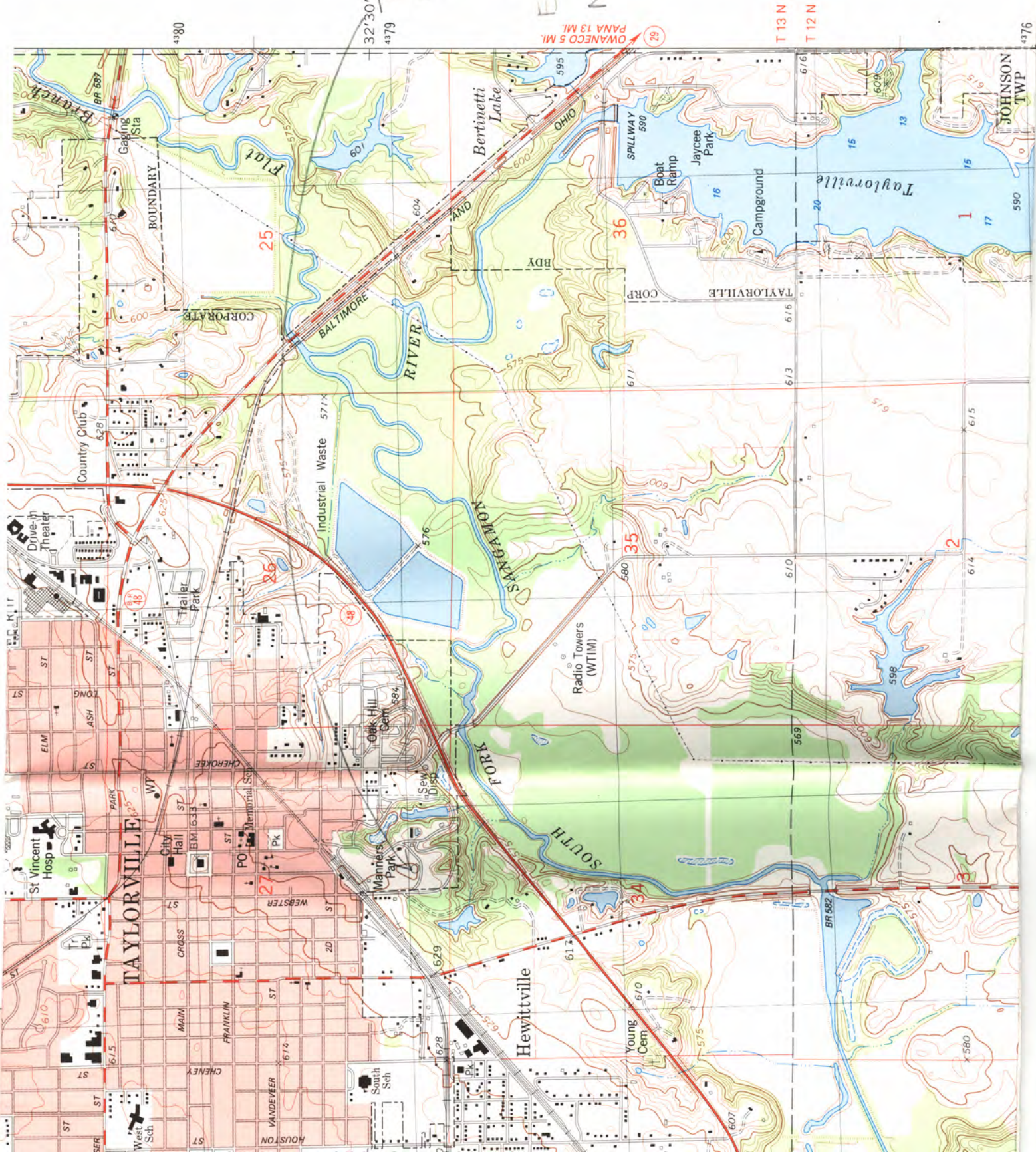
ILLINOIS, Christian County, Taylorville, Taylorville Chautauqua Auditorium, Manners Park (01/21/88)
ILLINOIS, Cook County, Oak Park, Marshall Field and Company Store, 1144 W. Lake St. (01/21/88)
ILLINOIS, Cook County, Tinley Park, Vogt, Karl, Building, 6811 Hickory St. (01/21/88)

LOUISIANA, Catahoula Parish, Trinity, Kirby House, Spencer and Pearl Sts. (01/21/88)
LOUISIANA, St. John the Baptist Parish, LaPlace, Montegut Plantation House, 402 E. Fifth St. (01/21/88)

MISSISSIPPI, Grenada County, Grenada, Grenada Masonic Temple (Grenada MRA), 210 S. Main St. (01/20/88)
MISSISSIPPI, Grenada County, Grenada, Lee-DuBard House (Grenada MRA), 317 Third St. (01/20/88)
MISSISSIPPI, Grenada County, Grenada, Odd Fellows and Confederate Cemetery (Grenada MRA), Corner of Cemetery & Commerce Sts. (01/20/88)
MISSISSIPPI, Grenada County, Grenada, South Main Historic District (Grenada MRA), S. Main St. (01/20/88)
MISSISSIPPI, Grenada County, Grenada, Walthall, Sen. Edward C., House (Grenada MRA), 73 College Blvd. (01/20/88)

NEBRASKA, Lancaster County, Lincoln, Lincoln Liberty Life Insurance Building, 113 N. Eleventh St. (01/19/88)
NEBRASKA, Lancaster County, Lincoln, Metropolitan Apartments, 502 S. Twelfth St.

32°30" Taylorville
Chautauqua
Auditorium
zone 16
E 302710
N 4378970



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