

MONTSERRAT RECREATIONAL DEMONSTRATION AREA,
Entrance Portal
Route 132 ~~South of McPherson Street~~
North Entrance, Knob Noster State Park
Knob Noster Vicinity
Johnson County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1926-A

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MONTSERRAT RECREATIONAL DEMONSTRATION AREA,
ENTRANCE PORTAL

- Location: Route 132 south of McPherson Street, Knob Noster, north entrance to Knob Noster State Park, Johnson County, Missouri.
- Significance: Built in 1939 by workers of the Work Projects Administration, the entrance portal to the Montserrat Recreational Demonstration Area (Knob Noster State Park) imparts a sense of boundary and beautification to the park's northern entranceway, and exemplifies the rustic tradition of Depression-era park architecture in Missouri.
- Description: The entrance portal consists of two matching stone walls with stone posts flanking either side of Route 132. Referred to as the left wing and the right wing, they are constructed of rough-cut, irregular-sized, native limestone blocks with flush mortar joints. The walls and posts extend 2'-6" below the ground surface along their entire lengths, with varying heights above the ground surface. Each wall originally began with a 4'-0"-square, 4'-0"-high end post placed 4'-0" from the edge of Route 132, with a gravel walk and curb between. The right wing's end post has since been removed to ground level. White oak hand railings leading from an adjacent bridge south of the walls were originally attached to the outer sides of the end posts. Running perpendicular to the road, stone walls 3'-5" high and 2'-4" wide extend 14'-0" to central posts which are 3'-6" square and 4'-0" high. From the central posts, each wall--still 2'-4" wide--turns north at a right angle toward McPherson Street, continuing for 1'-0" before entering a 90-degree curve leading away from Route 132. Along the length of the curved portion, about 15'-8", the height of each wall drops along a series of four levels placed symmetrically in relation to the curve. The first level nearest the central post is 3'-5" high and arcs 30 degrees for a distance of approximately 5'-3"; the second level is 10" lower and continues along another 30-degree arc; the third level drops another 7" to a height of 2'-0", and follows an arc of 15 degrees, or a distance of about 2'-7". The height of the wall lowers another 7" to 1'-5" and curves for the final 15 degrees, then continues 7'-0" along a straight line parallel with McPherson Street. Each wall ends with an end post 3'-6" square and 2'-0" high.
- History: The entrance portal was designed and constructed in 1939 as part of the Entrance Development project, Job No. 95(705), in the Montserrat Recreational Demonstration Area. The state of Missouri acquired the land in 1946 and renamed the area Knob Noster State Park. The portal's design was intended to "dignify the entrance to the area." Workers of the Work Projects Administration were involved in the portal's construction. The associated landscaping originally included plantings of wild plum, red

cedar, and Virginia creeper behind the portal walls, and mowed grass in front. In 1947, the Missouri State Highway Commission purchased the park's north entrance road which became part of State Route 132. In 1955, improvements to Route 132 involved removing the white oak railings originally attached to the walls' end posts, and erecting standard metal guard rails. It is not known when the right wing end post was removed. The main entrance to the park has since been shifted one mile to the southwest, lessening somewhat the visual impact of the portal's symbolic expression of boundary. However, the portal has retained much of its physical integrity, and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. Proposed improvements to Route 132 in the vicinity of the entrance development will involve relocating the highway about 200' to the east and obliterating the former entrance area. In conjunction with proposed improvements to Route 132 scheduled to begin in 1995, the portal will be matchmarked, disassembled, and re-erected at a predetermined location elsewhere within Knob Noster State Park.

Sources: "Entrance Development, Job No. 95(705), Montserrat Recreational Demonstration Area, Johnson County, Missouri." Blueprints, March 1939. Jefferson City: Division of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

Missouri State Highway Department. Design Plans, Route 132, Project No. D-AD-2(2), 1955. Jefferson City: Plans and Records Office, Design Division, Missouri Highway and Transportation Department.

Wright, Bonnie. "Montserrat Recreational Demonstration Area, Entrance Portal." Missouri Office of Historic Preservation Inventory Survey Form, August 1984. Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) Architecture in Missouri State Parks, 1933-1942, Thematic Resources Nomination. Jefferson City: Division of Parks and Historic Preservation, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, 1984.

Historian: David C. Austin, Cultural Resources Section, Design Division, Missouri Highway and Transportation Department, Jefferson City, October 1994.