United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Stearns Golf Course

other names/site number McY-276

Related Multiple Property NA

2. Location

street & number 131 Clubhouse Drive NA not for publication

city or town Stearns NA vicinity

state Kentucky code KY county McCreary code 147 zip code 42647

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this _X_ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property _X__ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ **national** ___ **statewide** _X_ **local**

Applicable National Register Criteria:

_x__ **A** ___ **B** ___ **C** ___ **D**

Signature of certifying official/Title **Craig Potts/SHPO** Date

Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register ___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register ___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Stearns Golf Course
Name of Property

McCreary County, Kentucky
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- [x] private
- [ ] public - Local
- [ ] public - State
- [ ] public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

- [x] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		district
1		site
1		structure
		object
3	0	**Total**

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

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.)

WPA Rustic

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: sandstone
walls: Wood weatherboard
roof:
other:

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Stearns Heritage Golf Club (McY-276) is a 9-hole golf course established in 19XX within Stearns, a former coal company town in McCreary County, Kentucky. The golf club lies eastern Kentucky, an area of few golf courses due to the ruggedness of its topography and scarcity of level land. Through the first half of the 20th century, Stearns was an active coal company-owned town, named after its parent company, Stearns Coal and Lumber Company, based in Ludington, Michigan. Stearns is located 2½ miles south of the count seat, Whitley City. Seven buildings of Stearns' former central business district were listed in 1988 as the Stearns Administrative and Commercial District (NRIS 88002528). The golf course lies 150 yards north of the Stearns District. The area proposed for listing is approximately 180 acres, which includes the golf course as a site, two contributing features—a clubhouse, and a pool—and no non-contributing features.

Character of Property and its Setting

The property is an irregularly shaped parcel, stretching some 600-800 yards north-south, and spanning only about 200 yards east-west at its widest. The full property includes a lake at its northern point. Trees line the property's western boundary; much of the eastern side is also bordered by trees. House lots and residential streets define the southern boundary and some of the northeast edge of the property. Many of those surrounding houses date to the era of significance, though others are later infill. Two transportation corridors skirt the eastern boundary—Golf Course Road and the historic railroad which once served Stearns, the Kentucky and Tennessee Railway, now known as the Big South Fork Scenic Railway, which continues to operate tourist passenger rides.

History of the Golf Course's Ownership

The Stearns Golf Club was owned by the Stearns Coal and Lumber Company all the years of the Period of Significance, and for several years afterward. The ownership of the property predates the creation of McCreary County in 1912. The table below tracks the transfers of ownership until the present:

Seller's Name	Buyer's Name	Deed Book #	Page #	Date of Deed	Purchase price
Bank of McCreary County	Stearns Golf Course LLC	193	756	3/2011	210,000
Rudy Hamlin	Bank of McCreary County	193	14	11/2010	175,000
Stearns Development	Stearns Recreational Association	89	433	08/1979	100,000
Stearns Coal and Lumber Company	Stearns Development	73	439	11/1973	1,000
Stearns Lumber Company	Stearns Coal and Lumber Company	60	610	08/17/1910	50,000
Justus S. Stearns	Stearns Lumber Company	Convey-ance Records #48	419	12/6/1905	-

Description of features within the nominated boundary

Golf Course—Contributing site
The course's original 9-hole route remains in use today. The course follows the natural contours of the land. The golf course was established in the first decade of the 20th century. It covers nearly 49 acres.

1. Clubhouse—Contributing building
Exterior
Construction of the clubhouse began in 1935 and was completed the following year. Its construction was funded by the WPA, and its design follows the rustic aesthetic that was given to many structures that were built in parks through that federal government program. It has a sandstone foundation with random coursing and pronounced mortar joints.

Photo 9: East and North sides

Photo 13: West side (back)

The main body of the Clubhouse is constructed of logs. The building has a simple rectangular form, with an exterior end chimney in each gable end, on the north and south sides. The roof ridge runs in a north-south orientation. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles. A porch is made on the building's north side by a pent roof with exposed rafter tails (photo 9). This porch appears to be an original feature because it rests above the historic sandstone foundation.

The historic entry to the building on the primary level occurs on the north side gable end, within the porch. The main entry door is situated to the right of the chimney stack. A short concrete ramp connects the porch to the parking lot, east of the building.

The building is built into a slope, so that it is a single story in the front, and has a walk-out basement level in the back, the west side (photo 13). Three doors exit the back from that basement level, to six steps that step down to the walkway surrounding the in-ground pool. Retaining walls of sandstone and pronounced mortar joints flank the basement walls. On the upper level are three 6-over-6 double-hung windows; on the basement level are two windows of 9 lights each, that appear to have fixed metal frames. Just to the left, before entering the porch, one finds the white wooden entrance to the building's basement, which houses the pool's filtration system, lifeguard facilities, locker and changing rooms, and the pool's eventual concession stand.

The east side of the building has one 6-over-6 light double-hung window, and a shed roofed projection.

In 1970, the building's logs were covered by wood sheets in an inverted board and batten siding pattern. Probably at that time, an addition was placed on the building's south side. That addition holds a kitchen. It is entered by a door on its east side.

Just off the porch is the club's practice green with sidewalks going in either direction.

Interior

The original floor plan of the building is intact. Round logs without bark line the wall surfaces. Two stone fireplaces face one another at opposite ends of the building's main room. The fireplace to the north wall has a flue to a now-bricked-up fireplace that once heated the porch. It is flanked by windows. The south wall's fireplace was used to heat the main room. That fireplace is now located behind a bar which was added in the 1970s. Each fireplace has a stone mantel.

Photo 22: Interior: east, south, and west walls

Photo 4: fireplace mantel on north wall

The interior west side wall has two windows and a door, which once gave access to the veranda overlooking the pool. Today, the enclosed veranda serves as the club's pro shop, and the door inside the clubhouse enters that same shop.

Two doors flank the stone fireplace on the interior's south wall, both giving access to a full-service kitchen. Off the kitchen is a small room that serves as a pantry and a doorway with access to the outside.

2. Pool—Contributing Structure

The kidney-shaped in-ground pool was constructed in the 1930s, one of only 805 WPA swimming pools constructed in America. The pool's diving board is on the south end with a lifeguard stand on the east side. The pool is notable as the first pool in McCreary County. The pool exists today in some state of disrepair, was once at the forefront of design and technology in advanced and gas chlorination systems. The pool's massive filtration system, located in the basement of the clubhouse, provided a more controlled swimming experience

than the often-polluted waters available for swimming elsewhere in the area. In the late 1970s, the cylinders were replaced in the system.

Pool (photo 10)

Ca. 1937: Pool and clubhouse (Goodman-Paxton Collection)

The pool was the scene of many parties and events. At times during its existence, the pool was open to the public. Today, the pool, surrounded by a chain link fence on 3 sides (to the north, south, and east). The pool's foundations are damaged by overgrown fauna and it is in much need of repair. To the pool's west, is the clubhouse, as well as the remnants of concessions stands, lifeguard facilities, bath and changing rooms.

3. Cart House—non-contributing building

The two-aisle cart house/garage is located along the walkway between holes 1 and 2. The white building is constructed of wood and tin siding. It was built after the Period of Significance, when golf carts became a more popular means for the sports transportation than walking and the club stopped hiring full-time cadies. Today, the building is still in use for its original purpose. Golf carts are provided for both club members and guests.

Cart House (photo 15)

Tennis Courts (photo 18)

4. Tennis Court—non-contributing structure

The club's tennis courts, standing near holes one and two, just over the hill from the clubhouse, are in significant need of repair, having not been used in some years. They were built in the late 1970s, and served as home to the local and county high school's tennis clubs until the 1990s when the McCreary County School District constructed courts on two campuses. For many ladies, tennis became a social sport, matching their husbands' preferences for golf. The once-green concrete courts, located side-by-side, are surrounded by a chain link fence, which is covered in ivy and kudzu. A combination of plant life and the elements have cracked the once popular courts' surfaces.

5, 6, & 7. Bridges over Ponds—non-contributing structures

Three metal framed truss bridges with wooden plank platforms have constructed over the two ponds at Stearns Heritage Golf Course. A third is a dryland bridge. These bridges were installed ca. 1970, replacing wood-framed bridges that were historic to the course. The bridges are approximately 50 feet and 20 feet in length and wide enough to allow golf carts to use the crossway. With their scenic location, they are a popular place for outings, and many photographers have used them over the years. The first bridge spans a waterway between holes 1 and 2. It was repaired in 2012. The second bridge is the dryland bridge, located in the vicinity of the first bridge, just ahead of hole one.

The third bridge is between holes six and seven. The bridge that crosses the pond is identical in design to the first, though given the pond's greater circumference, the bridge is approximately 10 feet longer.

8. Shelter/Pavilion—non-contributing building

The pavilion at the north end of the course was built ca. 1976, and serves multiple duties. The small red wooded-sided building is the ideal location for golfers caught in a rain or thunderstorm. Though, the building, today, has some graffiti and needs major repairs, it remains largely intact. The building is principally made up of a seated porch with benches and two small lavatory facilities.

Shelter (photo 7)

Changes to the Property Since the Period of Significance

Many changes and improvements were made to the Stearns Golf Course close to the time that the Stearns Company sold the property in the 1970s. Not only through the replacement of historic features, such as the bridges, but the covering of the clubhouse exterior, stand as the most important changes.

Stearns Golf Course
Name of Property

McCreary County, Kentucky
County and State

8. Stat ement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [x] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [ ] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [ ] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] B removed from its original location.
- [ ] C a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] D a cemetery.
- [ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F a commemorative property.
- [ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Recreation

Period of Significance

Ca. 1910

Significant Dates

Ca. 1910

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

unknown

Period of Significance (justification)

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

Stearns Heritage Golf Club (McY-276) meets National Register Criterion A. It is significant within the context of Coal Company Towns in Eastern Kentucky, 1854-1965. The town of Stearns, located in present-day McCreary County, Kentucky, became the hub of the Stearns Coal and Lumber Company activity. Michigan industrialist, Justus Smith Stearns, gained control of mining and timber rights in 30,000 acres over a 200-square mile area that extended from southern Kentucky into northern Tennessee. His company founded the town of Stearns in 1902. Over the next quarter-century, Stearns became an extensive company-owned town. The venture required a huge financial commitment by the company—construction of a railroad, the importing of a large workforce, constructing housing for those workers, and setting up a facsimile of a familiar and comfortable urban life for its employees—before the first dollar returned to the company from the sale of natural resources. Even the bleakest coal company-owned towns had some amenities missing from the native housing, such as electric lights. However the eastern coal field contained a few model coal towns, such as Stearns, and these places contained singular amenities, such as the Stearns Golf Course. A golf course in eastern Kentucky is certainly a conspicuous landscape feature. Level land in eastern Kentucky is scarce and precious, with highest priority given to using it for crops and housing sites. The Stearns Company's choice to use this land for a golf course, instead of for other purposes, served several company interests. The setting aside of so many prime acres for a recreation activity fully announced the power, wealth, and authority of the Stearns Company. The company could point to the golf course as a sign of its intent to provide humane environment for its captive workforce, one which would include leisure time for workmen and democratic access to what was elsewhere a playground of the rich. The company could use a golf course and its many other special features to attract and recruit the skilled engineers who were essential to the success of the venture. The company, too, could regulate the use of the golf course as a reward, or to confer status to the people it deemed privileged enough to use it. Starting in the 1930s, the economics of coal led companies to divest themselves of their extensive land holdings, resulting in huge social disruptions in this part of the state. Large properties such as the Stearns Golf Course often became prey to investors, whose planned uses adversely impacted many places' historic fabric. Remarkably, this facility has remained intact through several private owners, with the most recent one very interested in celebrating the historic identity associated with it.

Historic Context: Coal Company Towns in Eastern Kentucky, 1854-1965

The following historic context reprints pages 28-32 of an unpublished report, "Coal Company Towns in Eastern Kentucky, 1854-1941" (1991) by L. Martin Perry. The pages are presented largely verbatim, with the primary editing being omission of text which does not help interpret the nominated resource, and an occasional change in the wording to make the point relevant to the nominated property. The report focuses upon the housing characteristics of coal towns, not upon country clubs in company towns. However, the report draws strong distinctions between the model company towns, such as Stearns was, with the many hundreds of more typical places which come to mind when the term company town is used. The information here attempts to show that such an unusual feature as the Stearns Country Club was a normal part of a small group of places defined in the report as "model towns" owned by coal companies.

Characteristics of Coal Company Towns in Eastern Kentucky

Most eastern Kentucky coal company towns have been erased by demolition. It is no longer possible to know about them primarily through a survey of extant examples. A number of printed sources, though, can provide general information about them as a type of historic property. Such general information about the nature of coal towns will help in analysis of individual properties encountered In the field. These sources include documentary records (primarily government-sponsored studies and corporate records), oral interviews, and written narratives (both primary and secondary). This context is concerned with the physical nature of company-owned coal towns in eastern Kentucky, and relies heavily upon government studies. From this section will come general trends in coal towns that can aid recognition of coal town fragments by surveyors in the field. A property type analysis is included in this study, but not part of this nomination's historic context.

One cannot help but to be struck by the range of expressions coal company towns took in eastern Kentucky. They could be found in all shapes, sizes, quality, and levels of comfort. The largest of these, Lynch, Benham, Jenkins, Middlesboro, etc., are the most well known among the property type. These model towns left behind the most enduring physical resources, their construction was chronicled by industry journal and popular magazine, they were the most desirable places to live because of their range of creature comforts and the suggestion of paternalistic influences. But these towns are the least typical of the resource type overall. Much more common were more haphazardly created collections of one or two house types, cloned by the hundreds in a single location and squashed together in a narrow stream valley. Only a small fraction of these: remain from the hundreds which once existed, their houses long since cannibalized or moved elsewhere.

Magnusson's profile of company-owned industrial towns in 1920, based on study of 213 such places nationwide, describes eastern Kentucky coal towns fairly well. He found that, in general, all company towns exhibited. a sterile appearance brought about by uniformity of housing stock. a lack of landscaping or natural plant growth, and vague spatial definition due to dirt streets. Detached wood-frame four-room houses dominate the landscape, with privies tucked onto the rear of the lot (1920: pp. 12-13). Magnusson noted in a separate publication that Kentucky, Alabama, and Tennessee had a greater share of two-room houses than other study areas (1920a: 1048). Unlike mainstream American towns, which depend upon democratic control and support, these towns were under the financial care of the coal company; decisions about the town's maintenance and appearance were made according to how it benefitted the company. Magnusson noted that only one in seven study towns exhibited any form of planning, most of those being manufacturing towns whose owners viewed them as permanent installations, therefore, worth the expense of such niceties (1920: p. 29).

Model towns may be seen as distinct from more temporary camps, but also may have some historical/physieal connection to them. A single mine company could own both a model town and several smaller, less-plush villages at the same time. These may extend string-like along a mile or more of Stream valley. The model community would serve as the control center for these several satellite towns connected by rail (see, eg., "'A Mining Principality," in *Black Diamond*). This organization of activity across space would advertise the company's economic dominance of an area, and more important, would assemble a stable of workers whom could be shifted as needed There is some suggestion that mine companies used such arrangments much like a professional baseball team, moving workers in the way ball clubs move players from farm clubs to the big leagues or vice versa according to their performance. Nettie McGill, studying 464 miners in West Virginia coal towns in 1923, reported that model towns had a waiting list of miners hoping to be hired so they could enjoy the comforts not found in the company's smaller towns where they, currently worked. She also found that fully one-third of those studied had moved from another town in the prior two years (pp. 7-8).

Many model company towns contained features found in typical American towns of comparable size in the early-twentieth century. Benham, laid out in Harlan County by Wisconsin Steel Company, still has its historic theater, commissary, post office, hospital, meat market, city hall, firehouse, church, grade school, and a park. Lynch, built by U.S. Steel only a few miles east of Benham, contained most of the same features, as well as churches of additional denominations, and segregated schools for the children of Black miners. Stone, in Pike County, still shows its large warehouses for storage of supplies and machinery shops where equipment was repaired. Other features in model towns included washhouses, electric generating stations, and water and sewer plant.

A wider range of housing is found in model company towns than in lesser outposts. All company towns contained people of varying employment status. Small towns were horne to miners, foremen, and probably an engineer or two. In addition, larger towns had several engineers, white collar workers, company Stores, superintendents, etc. Houses in any location reflected those differences in, status. A particular house's workmanship, materials, quality, size, siting, and styling generally corresponded to the tenant’s relative status. With model towns serving as headquarters for its company's regional activities, and with its employees of higher ranks, these towns hold some of the Eastern Coal Field's grander residences. Generally the finest house(s) of both model town and smaller mine town commanded prominent overlooks on hilltop sites.

Caudill points to the boarding houses which also comprised the company town landscape but which may not have survived as well to the present. Such buildings contain 10-25 rooms for single men (p. 104).

The Coal Commission combined statistics for houses in both Kentucky coal fields with data from Alabama. Maryland, and Virginia. The Commission found horizontal wood siding on 68% of the houses and 28% with board and batten, although Maryland and Virginia skew the proportions due to their strong tradltion of horizontal wood siding prior to coal mining. Eastern Kentucky probably accounted for a strong share of the houses with vertical siding. The Commission also found that tar paper covered nearly three quarters of the roofs of these houses and wood shingles nearly all of the rest. Tin covered only 3% of the roofs (p. 1471). Interestingly, houses were found in Pruden and Fronde (Bell County) in 1991 that had a new application of rolled asphalt roofing. This material also was applied to a few of the houses' exterior walls, as well.

Electricity appears to have been the typical creature comfort in mine workers' housing. The Coal Commission noted. that 72% of the company-owned homes had hookups to electricity and/or gas, but that only 15.8% had running water and less than 1% had a bath, shower, or indoor toilet. Dismal as it seems, the eastern Kentucky situation was better than in some states, particularly Indiana and Illinois, which had a lower percentage of houses with indoor plumbing ,and a higher reliance upon outdoor privies (p. 1474-76).

Company towns ,with larger populations had distinct areas for different racial and ethnic groups. Such districting of a company town may be in evidence today as visible differences among house design. Blacks and European peoples were recruited for the mines, both because they worked for low wages, and because management could play minority groups off of one another, thereby reducing worker solidarity and lowering the potential for strikes. Some have used the .term "balkanization" to describe the racial tensions of segregated coal towns; Caudill calls such areas "turbulent Babels set in a wilderness" (p: 103·104). Housing with which these groups were associated may no longer be standing, though, because those houses would have been built with the poorest quality materials and construction techniques, given the company town practice of equating status and housing quality.

Accounts of the construction of the model company towns support a hypothesis that box framing was imported, not brought from the hollow to the company town. The story of the construction of massive company towns generally includes reference to teams of carpenters from outside the local area. These carpenters could have been full-time builders for the coal company or hired under contract to the company. Jenkins, for example, was constructed for Consolidation Coal Company'by the Nicola Building Company of Pittsburgh. Benham and Lynch were erected by their owners, Wisconsin Steel and U.S. Steel, respectively (see, e.g., Eavenson, 1921; 532).

The Experiment Station studies cited above found that box framing systems were entrenched in the local building vocabulary by the 1930s. Company-owned towns were pervasive near the main and branch lines, so area residents would have had a chance to view the towns, if not live in them, on their way to work in the mines.

These facts beg the question of where the carpenters who were building company towns obtained the know-how to construct box framed houses. Nonetheless, studies have not surfaced which identify eastern Kentucky locations whose houses were built in that system prior to the inhabitants' contact with coal mining towns.

History of the Stearns Country Club

John E. Butler arrived in Stearns from Michigan on New Year's Day, 1903, as the General Manager of the Stearns Coal and Lumber Company. He was a man who enjoyed tennis until he turned 50, and regretfully gave up his sport for another: golf.

Of course, there was no golf course in Stearns during those days. A cow pasture was acquired, upon which the first course was constructed. It consisted of 2 holes, 200 feet apart, made by removing sod and leveling off round spots about 12 feet in diameter. Tin cups were sunk into the middle of those primitive greens.

Barbed wire encircled the new course, to prevent the cattle from reclaiming their former feeding place. Though not always successful, Butler and the young golfers of Stearns played around tree stumps, dodged aggressive cattle, traversed ravines, and endured greens littered with sand.

As more and more townspeople took up the sport, the course grew to accommodate the need, eventually expanding to the traditional 9-hole layout we find today, and Butler, whose had robbed him of tennis, had become Stearns' best golfer.

The 1930s saw more expansion of the course. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) gave a grant to Stearns for the construction of a clubhouse and pool, both of which remain today. Tennis courts, too, were eventually added as an appropriate adjunct to a country club. This was one of many projects assisted by the federal government, under Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. During the years 1933-1942, at least six hundred courses were built or renovated across the nation through the Civil Works Administration (CWA) and WPA. These grants underwrote the main cost of constructing a golf course—labor—by employing people who were out of work. New Deal funding of golf courses made golf available to a wider group of people. This support helped the sport survive, and even thrive, through the 1930s.

WPA clubhouses often took on a rustic aesthetic, as was the case in Stearns, where the clubhouse was built as a stone foundation with a main body constructed of logs. The project began in 1935 and was completed the following year.

The course became home to the Stearns Invitational, a perennial favorite among golfers across the Southeast. William "Billy" Burke, a professional of some acclaim, won the first Invitational, before going on to win the US Open, giving the club its first brush with the PGA. The Invitational began as a Pro/Am event, but when it was discovered that the professional carried off the majority of honors, the event became an exclusively amateur affair. With its arrangement, winning in Stearns was never an easy accomplishment. Tradition says, if a golfer can shoot par on the last three holes, the chance of winning the tournament is increased.

In 1939, Johnny Fischer was the first amateur to break par in a 36-hole contest, and for a time, long-driving professional Tommy Wright, a one-time Stearns Club pro, held the course record.
Several PGA professionals, have played here, and, more recently, renowned basketball coach Rick Pitino was registered as a player.

Unlike many prominent courses, women and youths were always a common sight on the Stearns Golf Course, even participating in tournament play along the way, as the club hosted golf enthusiasts from across the country.

Evaluation of Significance of the Stearns Golf Club within the historic context Coal Company Towns in Eastern Kentucky, 1854-1965

Stearns Golf Club is a very unusual place, as well as a significant one. It shows the lengths that some coal companies went to create a familiar experience in a very foreign place, importing a feature of urban leisure in a place of rural work. It was not unique, however. One other eastern Kentucky model town, Middlesboro, was platted in 1888 and included a golf course. Several web sites claim Middlesboro to be the oldest country club in continuous use in the United States (e.g., the Kentucky Tourism Site, http://www.kentuckytourism.com/Listing/2513/, accessed on February 10, 2015). *Golf Magazine* published in January 1995 a list of the nation's oldest golf courses, the bulk of which had been established before 1888. Regardless, golf has served as such as strong symbol of elite culture, that it became an essential item for two mining capitalists to place on their eastern Kentucky landscapes, to signal their powers to subdue the natural landscape, perhaps even more eloquently than a horse track would have.

Evaluation of the Integrity of the Stearns Golf Club's significance in light of its current physical condition

Stearns Golf Club is being interpreted within the context coal company-owned communities, for the way it transmits its identity and depicts the role it played in a particular company town. It transmits these messages through a large landscape as well as by its clubhouse building and its pool, with all 3 resources working in conjunction to provide the full story it has to tell about the evolution of Stearns, from a community owned by a coal company to the current period, where Stearns exists as a conventional town. The key integrity factors which give it the ability to tell its story are location, setting, and materials. If all three of these factors exist, there will be an integrity between our sense of the Golf Club's significance and its current physical condition, making it eligible.

Stearns Golf Club has integrity of **location**; it has not moved. It also has integrity of **setting**; it has neither lost its interior site setting, nor have many new elements been introduced into that setting, and the extra-site setting remains fairly the same as it was at the end of the Period of Significance. Two key aspects of the location and setting remain in place, and were elements of the property from the beginning. First, the place's relative flatness, and the size of that flat land, gives this location a distinctness because it resides in a part of the state generally defined by steep topography. That topographic character gives it a quality of otherness. The quality of otherness is reinforced by the second aspect of the property, the almost total screening of adjacent properties by a perimeter of trees that nearly encircle the entire property. Especially when one is on the golf course, this particular location and setting allow one to experience the resource in a very deep way. For many who play golf—including those who played on this course historically—the game's sense of seclusion is one of its draws. The location and setting of the Stearns Golf Club strongly support that sense of apartness from the everyday.

Stearns Golf Club has integrity of **materials**. The materials of the landscape appear to have been maintained. The course's groundskeeper obviously has had to treat the resource as a group of living organisms, and thus, has worked to keep the course intact—the fairways remain as fairways; the rough as rough, and the trees as trees. With the built environment, some loss of material intactness has occurred. The pool and tennis courts have suffered some neglected maintenance; the exterior logs of the clubhouse have been covered over with wood siding. Comparison photography is included in this nomination to show that where materials have been lost, viewing points still exist in which one can recognize quite easily the historic views and vistas that transmit the important identity of a golf course—of *this particular* golf course.

Finally, the Stearns Golf Club has an integrity of **feeling** and **association**. The important historic feeling, that of seclusion, was discussed above, under the topic of integrity of setting and location. The fact that owners after the Stearns Coal and Timber Company have maintained this historic resource gives some evidence to the power of the Golf Club's association. That is, the owners have felt that continuing to use this land in its historic way is a valuable choice, when other uses would be possible. While golf has seen a recent increase in public popularity, that phenomenon cannot account for this resource's continued use as a golf facility. McCreary County at large (population: 18,306, 2010 Census), has neither the population nor the economic muscle (median household income in 2010: $19,348) to keep a golf course alive. Not surprisingly, the facility has failed and been rescued by a succession of owners in the last 10 years. Each succeeding owner has approached this resource as more than a simple income source, but have seen their role as stewards of an important remnant of local history With integrity of location, setting, materials, and feeling, this large resource can be said to have integrity of association, and thus be eligible for National Register listing.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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http://www.appalachianhistory.net/2013/09/stearns-ky-emerges-out-of-big-survey.html

Stearns Golf Course
Name of Property

McCreary County, Kentucky
County and State

____ 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 # _____
____recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

____Other State agency
____Federal agency
____Local government
____University
____Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____ McY-276_____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 52.05 acres

UTM References
Whitley City quad
Coordinates calculated via ArcGIS Explorer

Coordinates in NAD 83:

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	725403.41	4065789.11	3	16	725063.27	4064587.06
2	16	725494.06	4064609.12	4	16	725050.65	4065772.78

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)
The area proposed for National Register listing is comprised of 3 parcels, defined and mapped by the McCreary County Property Valuation Administrator under the following account numbers:

105-40-04-061.00, 48.80acres
121-20-01-021.00, 1.06 acres
105-40-04-082.00, 2.19 acres

Boundary Justification
The area proposed for listing retains integrity of location and setting, making it most appropriate for National Register listing. Some fringe areas that were historically owned by the Stearns Company and were considered part of the Golf Course; those parcels have been subdivided and left out of this boundary for they have modern houses on them. They lie along the northeast perimeter of the area proposed for listing.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shane Gilreath and Marty Perry/National Register Coordinator

organization McCreary County Museum, a division of McCrary County Heritage Foundation

date March 2015

street & number Street address: 1 Henderson Street
Mailing address: PO Box 452

telephone 606-376 (MCHF); 606-376-5730 (museum)

city or town Stearns state Kentucky zip code 42647

e-mail shanegilreath@hotmail.com

Photographs:

Name of Property: Stearns Heritage Golf Course
City or Vicinity: Stearns
County: McCreary
State: Kentucky
Photographer: Shane Gilreath
Date Photographed: 2-26-15 (unless otherwise noted)

Photo Number, Description of image, and direction camera is facing:
1/31 – dryland bridge located approaching first hole on the southwest side of the golf course. East Façade, camera facing west
2/31 – inside of the clubhouse. Wall on west side of the main room, showing door entering the back rooms of the pro-shop, which would have once entered the veranda overlooking the pool. camera facing west

3/31 – Main entrance door to the clubhouse. The door faces north. Camera facing north
4/31 – fireplace and mantle on the southern wall of the main room of the clubhouse, behind the bar. Camera facing south
5/31 – bridge over the largest pond, approximately midway down the the east side of the golf course. East facing façade, camera facing west

6/31 – shelterhouse on the north west, back side of golf course. South façade, camera facing northwest
7/31 – shelter house on the north west, back side of golf course, close up. South façade, camera facing north
8/31 – east facing side of the clubhouse, showing entrance to the kitchen on the south facing, back side of the clubhouse, and eastern facing, side view of the front porch, facing north. Camera facing west

9/31 – showing front porch of the clubhouse and door for basement entrance midway on building's exterior. East façade, camera facing south west

10/31 – pool on west side of clubhouse, also showing door entrances to the basement. Camera facing south
11/31 – showing pool and clubhouse from the west side. West façade, camera facing southeast
12/31 – showing diving board on the south side of the pool. Camera facing southeast
13/31 – showing west façade of clubhouse on the side with pool. Also visible are entrances into the clubhouse basement.
14/31 – pool; camera facing northeast
15/31 – cart barn on the west side of pool and next to tennis courts, moving toward hole 1. North façade, camera facing south

16/31- bridge over first pond, between hole 1 and 2, on southwest side of golf course. Camera facing north east

17/31 – bridge over first pond, between hole 1 and 2, on southwest side of golf course. Camera facing east
18/31 – tennis courts. Slightly visible are the center net posts on both courts. Taken 3/1/2015 Camera facing south east

19/31 – tennis courts. Slightly visible are the net posts on both courts. Taken 3/1/2015. Camera facing south
20/31 – tennis courts, showing net posts in the center of both courts. Taken 3/1/2015. Camera facing south
21/31 – bar inside of clubhouse on the south wall. Mantle of fireplace is visible behind bar. North façade, camera facing south

22/31 – showing south wall (back end) of clubhouse's main room. Bar and mantle on south wall are visible. Camera facing southeast

23/31 – ninth hole, slightly north east of clubhouse. Taken 6/21/2014
24/31 – bridge over pond between holes 1 and 2, on the west side of golf course. Taken 6/21/2014 camera facing northeast

25/31 – bridge over pond between holes 1 and 2, on the west side of golf course. Taken 6/21/2014 Camera facing southwest

26/31 – images showing the course from the clubhouse. Taken 6/21/2014 Camera facing north
27/31 – bridge over pond between holes 1 and 2, on the west side of golf course,. Taken 6/21/2014. Camera facing north west

28/31 – image showing the course from the clubhouse, taken 6/21/2014 Camera facing north
29/31 – Photo illustrating the fairways midway on course. Taken 6/21/2014. Camera facing west
30/31 – inside clubhouse, image showing the north and east walls on the main room. Taken 6/8/2013 Camera facing north east

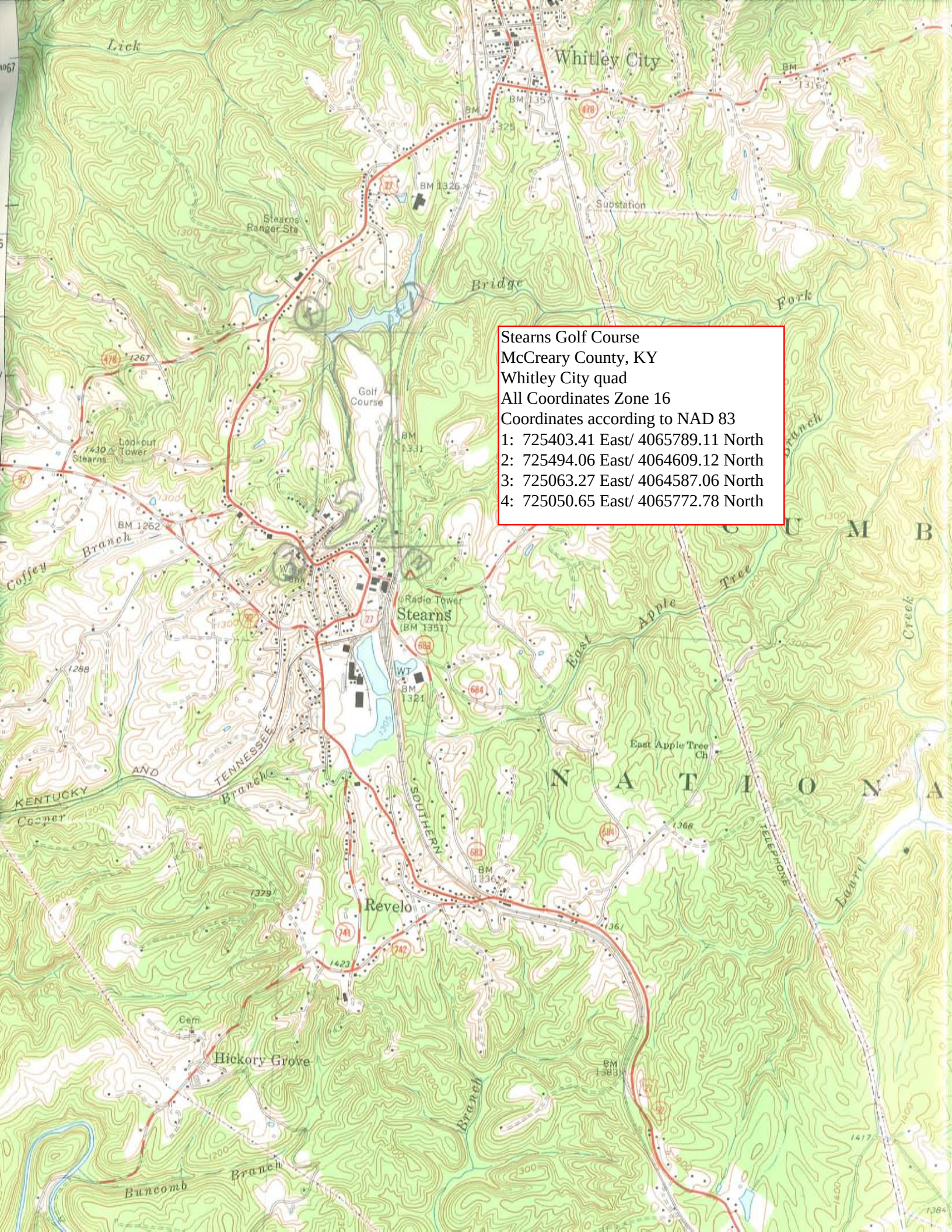
31/31 – hole 9 during the Stearns Invitational 2013. Taken 6/8/2013 Camera facing north west

Property Owner:

name Stearns Golf Course, LLC.

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____


Stearns Golf Course
McCreary County, KY
Whitley City quad
All Coordinates Zone 16
Coordinates according to NAD 83
1: 725403.41 East/ 4065789.11 North
2: 725494.06 East/ 4064609.12 North
3: 725063.27 East/ 4064587.06 North
4: 725050.65 East/ 4065772.78 North
Whitley City
Substation
Stearns Ranger Sta
Bridge
Fork
Golf Course
Lookout Tower
Stearns
Coffey Branch
Radio Tower
Stearns
(BM 1351)
East Apple Tree
Tree
Creek
East Apple Tree Ch
KENTUCKY AND TENNESSEE
Branch
Cooper
SOUTHERN
TELEPHONE
Laurel
Revelo
Gem
Hickory Grove
Buncomb
Branch
Branch
N A T I O N A
C U M B

STEARNS HERITAGE GOLF COURSE
Based on the McCreary County PVA Map
All building and sites of interest are marked in yellow numbers to be listed below:

1. Clubhouse
2. Pool
3. Cart Barn/Garage
4. 2 Tennis Courts
5. Bridge over pond #1
6. Dryland Bridge
7. Bridge over pond #2
8. Shelter House/Pavilion

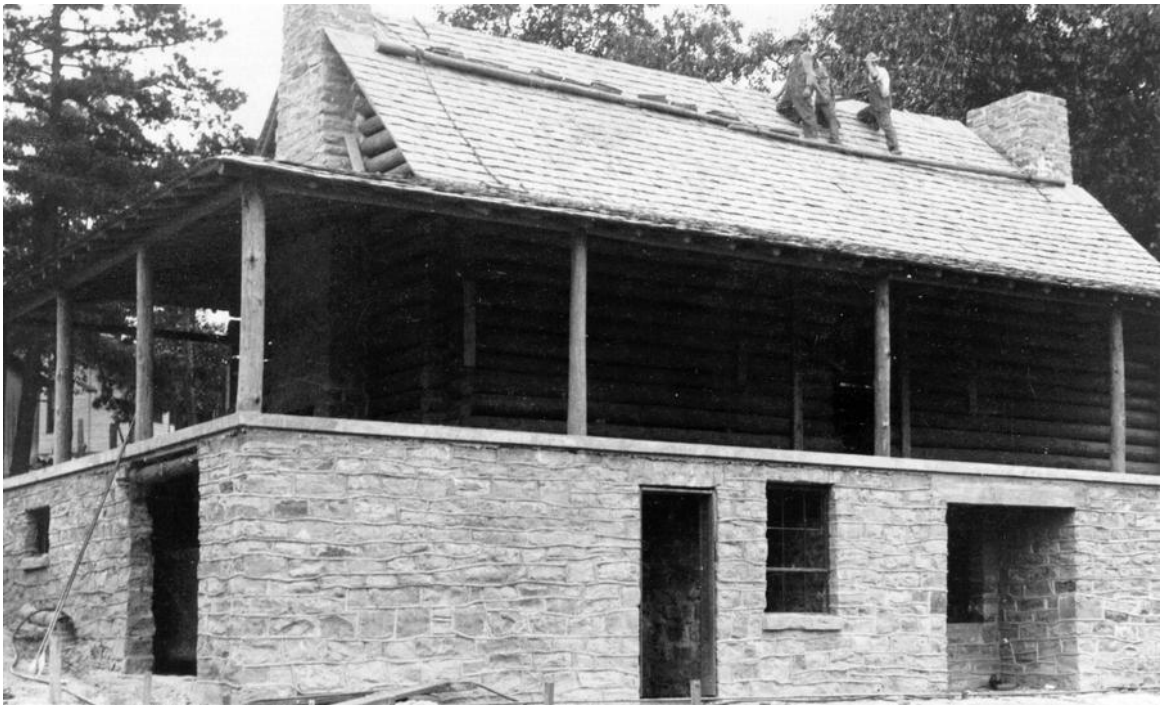
Historic Photos of Stearns Golf Course from the Goodman-Paxton Collection, Kentucky Virtual Library. Accessed on 3/21/15 at: http://kdl.kyvl.org/catalog?f%5Bsource_s%5D%5B%5D=Goodman-Paxton+Photographic+Collection%2C&q=Stearns&search_field=all_fields

Community House and Swimming Pool at Stearns, 1937

Community House and Swimming Pool at Stearns

Construction of a concrete swimming pool, 65' X 100', in the public park at Stearns, KY

Construction of a log recreational building with stone masonry foundation, the construction of a concrete swimming pool and other improvements for a public park at Stearns, KY



Improvements for a public park at Stearns, KY. A later view of the community building, showing men placing shingle roof. Photograph taken July 29, 1936

Interior of Stearns Club House

Stearns Clubhouse and Swimming Pool, 1937

Stearns Community Park building under construction

Stearns Swimming Pool with golf course in background, 1937

The community building in the public park at Stearns, KY

The community building showing a small portion of the swimming pool. 1936

The Stearns Pool, Adjoining Golf Course, Post Card

Stearns, historic view of wood milling area (south of golf course), aerial photo