

By GISEELLE ARREDONDO

• Leader & Times

The origins of each park in Liberal become more unknown by younger generations as time passes by. Perhaps it's easy to admire one area of Liberal's recreation area without really thinking about the history that created it.

By word of mouth, a peculiar story about Harrison Circle came to be. The story said that the park was once used during World War II by the military. It was also said that the seemingly long, protruding streets surrounding the park were once used for planes to land.

"I have never heard that, no. To my knowledge, I mean," Liberal Parks Director Bill Houk said. "I'm not saying that's not true."



However, through research and a conversation with Houk, one can learn that Harrison Circle, which is located in what was once known as Parkview addition, was designed and limited to residential housing only. It really had nothing to do with any war.

And by no means, did Blue Bonnet get used as a place to treat the wounded soldiers, either.

“Now Blue Bonnet Park, that used to be where all the apartments were for all the Army Air Base people. There were barracks and what not, and later on, they were turned into apartments,” Houk said. “Oh sure, stories can get a little skewed.”

Harrison Park opened in September 1927, and its opening was celebrated with a barbecue and band concert. The area consisted of a circle that measured 224 feet by 375 feet, and the developers at the time thought it the finest park in Liberal. There was a contest that determined the name of the park, and the winner got a \$25 gold piece. C.W Law was awarded the gold piece. The deadline was Oct. 13 and the name Legion Park was selected.

During the depression, money was short and progress came slow, so it wasn't until the '40s that houses were built around the park. Trees were planted along Maple Boulevard so there would be uniformity.

The developer of the area, Roy Harrison, was one of the first home owners around the circle. Thus, the park became known as the Harrison Circle. In the 1960s, the park was turned over to the city's park department for care.

Houk said that there are many plans for the parks and at the moment there is not anything in particular to be added to Harrison Park. However, the city is always looking to keep its parks up to high maintenance and strives to provide recreation to adults and kids.

“We got our long range plans for the parks,” Houk said. “A lot of new things going in. And of course, Leete Park is one we're concentrating on right now. The parks are a high priority.”