

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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 Historic Local Government Buildings in Oklahoma's All-Black Towns

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number (see continuation sheet)

N/A not for publication

city, town

N/A vicinity of

state Oklahoma

code 40

county (continuation sheet)

code (cont. sheet)

**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 type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>N/A</u> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> thematic	<u>N/A</u> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name (continuation sheet)

street & number

city, town

N/A vicinity of

state

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. (continuation sheet)

street & number

city, town

state

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1983  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office-Oklahoma Historical Society

city, town Oklahoma City state Oklahoma 73105

## 7. Description

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

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The two properties nominated in the Historic Local Government Buildings in Oklahoma's All-Black Towns thematic group were built in 1910 and 1933. The two city halls are among the oldest properties in their respective towns and are the oldest remaining local government buildings in any of the twelve historic all-black towns which still exist in Oklahoma. Both are located in the Arkansas River Valley and along the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad near Muskogee (Red Bird is located northeast of Muskogee in southern Wagoner County and Taft is located southwest of Muskogee in north central Muskogee County).

Both buildings are constructed of permanent materials (Taft City Hall of brick and Red Bird City Hall of native sandstone), one-story structures with hipped roofs, and have minimal decorative features. Although plain in design, they reflect the small town needs for a functional structure to accommodate the governing bodies of their respective communities.

Neither of the buildings have been altered nor have been removed from their original sites near the downtown areas of both towns. The overall integrity of both properties remains intact. Architecturally, they retain their original character although both are in need of paint, especially doors and window surrounds. Historically, they continue to serve the role for which they were constructed and are still owned by their respective city governments.

The two properties included in the Historic Local Government Buildings in Oklahoma's All-Black Towns are:

- (1) Taft City Hall (1910)
- (2) Red Bird City Hall (1933)

## 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 type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) (Ethnic)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1910-Present **Builder/Architect** Red Bird (J.M. Jackson - Builder)

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)** Taft (Unknown)

The Historic Local Government Buildings in Oklahoma's All-Black Towns thematic nomination is significant because: (1) the two properties are the oldest remaining local government buildings in the twelve historic all-black towns still in existence in Oklahoma, and (2) they are among the oldest remaining properties in their respective towns of Red Bird and Taft.

During the opening of Oklahoma and Indian Territories prior to statehood in 1907, approximately 7,800 blacks migrated into present-day Oklahoma seeking homesteads. Edwin P. McCabe, former attorney-general of Kansas and black separatist leader, came to Oklahoma in 1889 to promote the establishment of an all-black state to be created from the two territories. After his original objective of an all-black state failed, McCabe encouraged and promoted the founding of all-black towns during the 1890s and early 1900s. His all-black town idea resulted in the establishment of twenty-nine such communities of which twenty-five were located in Indian Territory and four in Oklahoma Territory.

Two of the all-black towns founded prior to statehood were Taft and Red Bird, both located in Indian Territory near Muskogee. Situated along the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad and within the rich Arkansas River Valley, both communities served as destination points for black migrants into the state as well as those black freedmen which had remained in Indian Territory following the Civil War.

Red Bird, founded in 1902, and Taft, established in 1903, became rural market centers for blacks living in and around their respective towns. The Muskogee Cimeter, a black newspaper in Muskogee, reported in 1905 that both communities were excellent townsites and encouraged blacks to locate in the two towns. By 1907, when Oklahoma became a state, Red Bird's population had reached 140 and Taft had 225 inhabitants.

Taft's City Council voted to build a local government building in 1910 and it was completed shortly thereafter. Red Bird's City Hall was constructed in 1933 after the town's council had used various other facilities in the community since 1902. Although the population of the two communities has fluctuated (Red Bird now has 280 residents and Taft 525), they have retained their own city government and the focal point for the communities has been the historic city halls. Both properties are owned by the city governments of their respective communities. In 1974 Lelia Foley became the first black woman in the United States to be elected mayor of a city and she conducts her town council meetings in the Taft City Hall.

In addition to serving as local government facilities, the Red Bird and Taft City Halls have also been used as meeting places for community organizations. Only twelve of the historic all-black towns of Oklahoma remain in existence and the Red Bird and Taft City Halls are the only local government buildings which exist in any of these communities. Because of their political significance to each community, the two properties continue the historic role for which they were built -- Taft City Hall for more than 70 years and the Red Bird City Hall for more than 50 years.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

(see continuation sheet)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property both properties are less than one acre

Quadrangle name (see continuation sheet)

Quadrangle scale 7.5"

UTM References (see continuation sheet)

A 

Zone	Easting						Northing												

B 

Zone	Easting						Northing												

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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Verbal boundary description and justification

(see continuation sheet)

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Bryan Brown Supervised by Dr. George Carney

organization Department of Geography

date February, 1984

street & number Oklahoma State University

telephone 405-624-6250

city or town Stillwater

state Oklahoma 74078

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

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

date \_\_\_\_\_

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Page 2

Historic Local Government Buildings in Oklahoma's All-Black Towns1. Taft City Hall (No. 1 on Sketch Map and Photos 1-3)

Location: Elm and Seminole  
Taft, Oklahoma 74463

County: Muskogee Code: 101

Owner of Property: City of Taft  
P.O. Box 6  
Taft, OK 74463

Location of Legal Description: Office of County Clerk  
Muskogee County Courthouse  
Muskogee, OK 74401

Description: The Taft City Hall is a one-story, detached local government building constructed of red brick laid in the common bond with a header course every seventh row. It is approximately 15' x 30' and has a hipped roof with a plain wooden fascia board.

The front or east side of the building has a single wooden framed door. The door has wood panels and a double paned window light above. A weather screen door protects the entrance.

The north side has two wooden framed, 2/2 double-hung sash-type windows. Both windows have rowlock-laid brick sills, one has a double layered semi-elliptical arch above and the other a plain wooden lintel.

The south side has a small 1/1 sash-type window encased in a wooden frame. This window is covered by an iron window grille. A second window on this side has been boarded up.

At the rear or west side of the building is a wooden framed and paneled door leading into the back part of the building.

Alterations are minimal. The original roof has been replaced with composition shingles. The cornice, window surrounds, and doors need repair and paint, however, the basic structure remains intact.

Statement of Significance: The Taft City Hall is the oldest remaining local government building in any of the twelve all-black towns still in existence in Oklahoma. Built in 1910, seven years after the town was founded, the property has served as a meeting place for Taft's city government for more than 73 years. The all-black town of Taft was founded in 1903 in Indian Territory and served as a rural market center for blacks who migrated from the South as well as those black freedmen who remained in Indian Territory following the Civil War. Taft's population had reached 225 by the time of statehood and the stability of the community resulted in the formation of a city council. In 1910 the city of Taft built the nominated property to house local political meetings as well as to serve as a focal point for other community organizations. For the past 73 years, the Taft City Hall has retained its historic integrity and continues to serve the community of Taft as its only local government structure.

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Historic Local Government Buildings in Oklahoma's All-Black Towns

Major Bibliographical References:

Tolson, Arthur L., The Black Oklahomans, A History: 1541-1972. New Orleans: Edwards Printing Co., 1966.

Ruth, Kent, Oklahoma Travel Handbook. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977.

Personal Interview: Mayor Lelia Davis, July, 1983

Quadrangle Name: Taft, Oklahoma

Scale: 7.5 minutes

UTM: 15/269900/3960230

Verbal Boundary: Lot 14, Block 17, Original Townsite of Taft, OK

2. Red Bird City Hall (No. 2 on Sketch Map and Photos 4-6)

Location: Boston Street  
Red Bird, OK 74458

County: Wagoner Code: 145

Owner of Property: City of Red Bird  
Red Bird, OK 74458

Location of Legal Description: Office of County Clerk  
Wagoner County Courthouse  
Wagoner, OK 74467

Description: The Red Bird City Hall is a one-story, detached local government building constructed of native sandstone of random course finish. The square-shaped building has a hipped roof covered with green composition shingles and attenuated wooden rafters. A single stack red brick interior chimney is located on the west end of the roof.

The front or north side of the building has a wooden framed central entrance door. The door is constructed of vertical wood planks. To the west of the door is a wooden framed, paired, double-hung, sash-type window with a smooth ashlar lintel. The left side of the window has 4/6 lights and the right 1/6 lights. The paired window to the east of the door has a wooden frame and is a double-hung, 1/1 sash type. On the northeast corner of the facade, a smooth ashlar cornerstone is incorporated in the wall of the building.

The west and east sides have no windows or doors. At the rear or south side, there are two windows on either side of a rear entrance door. The door has a wooden frame with vertical wooden planks. The wooden framed windows are double-hung sash types with 6/4 lights.

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Although the roof was recently recovered and the window surrounds and doors need paint, the basic structure remains intact.

Statement of Significance: The Red Bird City Hall is the second oldest local government building located in the twelve historic all-black towns still in existence in Oklahoma. The all-black town of Red Bird was established in 1902 in Indian Territory. It was one of twenty-seven such communities founded during the Twin Territorial Era. Of the twelve all-black communities which still exist, Red Bird is one of the oldest. By 1907, when Oklahoma entered the Union, Red Bird's population had reached 140 and was a rural market center for the black farmers who lived in the rich Arkansas River Valley. Red Bird's population peaked during the 1920s at approximately 400. The town's city government leaders met at various facilities such as schools and churches until 1932 when they decided to build the nominated property.

Completed in 1933, the Red Bird City Hall has served as the local government center for more than 50 years. It is used not only for local government functions, but also as a meeting place for other civic and community organizations.

Major Bibliographical References:

Tolson, Arthur L., The Black Oklahomans, A History: 1541-1972. New Orleans: Edwards Printing Co., 1966.

Teall, Kaye M., Black History in Oklahoma: A Resource Book. Oklahoma City: Oklahoma City Public Schools, 1971.

Muskogee Cimeter, December 28, 1905.

Personal Interview: Josephine Cook, June, 1983.

Quadrangle Name: Red Bird, Oklahoma

Scale: 7.5 minutes

UTM: 15/266285/3975140

Verbal Boundary: Lots 1-4, Block 144, Original Townsite of Red Bird, OK.

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## Local Government Buildings in All-Black Towns

