

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received JUL 25 1988

date entered

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

1. Name

Historic Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) Public Buildings, Recreational Facilities,
and Cemetery Improvements in Southeastern Oklahoma, 1935-1943 (Thematic Resources)
and/or common

2. Location See continuation sheets for data on individual properties

street & number

not for publication

city, town

vicinity of

state

code

county

code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
☐ district	☒ public	☒ occupied	☒ agriculture	☐ museum
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☒ unoccupied	☒ commercial	☒ park
☒ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☒ educational	☒ private residence
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☒ entertainment	☒ religious
☐ object	N/A in process	☐ yes: restricted	☒ government	☐ scientific
	N/A being considered	☒ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial	☐ transportation
		☐ no	☒ military	☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name various—see continuation sheets

street & number

city, town

vicinity of

state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. see continuation sheets

street & number

city, town

state

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Oklahoma Comprehensive Survey has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ nodate 1984 ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Preservation Office, Oklahoma Historical Society

city, town Oklahoma City

state Oklahoma

7. Description

See continuation sheets for data on individual properties.

Condition

☐ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

☐ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This thematic nomination deals with a portion of the physical legacy in Southeastern Oklahoma of the Works Progress Administration, later renamed the Works Project Administration. The Franklin Roosevelt administration created the WPA in May, 1935 as one of its New Deal programs to give work to employable persons made destitute by the economic depression then gripping the United States as a whole and Oklahoma in particular. By the end of 1940, the "useful" projects of the agency produced a host of public structures and improvements noted for their architectural type, style, materials and workmanship. This nomination relates only to WPA constructed public buildings, recreational facilities and cemetery improvements in eleven southeastern Oklahoma counties, previously designated by the State Historic Preservation Officer as Comprehensive Planning Management Region IV. The physical legacy of other depression era work programs such as the Civil Works Administration (CWA), the National Youth Administration (NYA), the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) and the Public Works Administration (PWA) have not been included because of basic philosophical and methodological differences with the WPA.

The geographical area included in the nomination encompasses some 11,521 square miles, or one-sixth of the State of Oklahoma. It reaches from the Arkansas and North Canadian rivers in the north to Red River on the south, and from the Arkansas state border on the east to the 96.5 meridian in the west. The terrain ranges from mountainous to prairie, while the vegetation consists of oak-hickory forests, blackjack oak woodlands and tall grasses. Predominant economic activities in the 1930s included coal mining, forestry, cattle ranching and agriculture (corn and cotton), although with reference to the latter two-thirds of the soils were sub-marginal and suffered serious sheet and gully erosion.

The nomination area had and has homogeneity beyond economy and geography. It is co-extensive with the boundaries of the old Choctaw Nation, a political entity of Native Americans that ceased to exist in 1906. This, its southern sub-culture characteristics and its Democratic politics, account for the region's contemporary title of "Little Dixie." Demographically, in the 1930s the area differed dramatically from the rest of Oklahoma. While the state as a whole registered a population decline of some 2.6%, the eleven southeastern counties increased by some 10.3%. By the end of the decade the 312,532 residents of the nomination area constituted 13.4% of Oklahoma's total population.

The physical, economic and cultural environment of the nomination area in the 1930s shaped the building program of the WPA. Within this general context, however, three considerations were most important. First, the project had to be "useful" in terms of the needs of a particular community. Second, projects had to be sponsored by public bodies such as school districts and city, county or state governments, which would contribute part of the total cost, usually in construction materials. And third, at least 90% of the project workmen had to come from employable persons then on the relief rolls. Not all but certainly most workers, therefore, were of the "unskilled" variety, and most projects were labor intensive. Given these three considerations and the physical, economic and cultural context of Southeastern Oklahoma, WPA building programs had definite and obvious parameters.

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This was especially apparent in the types of structures completed by the WPA. The criteria of usefulness and community sponsorship produced large numbers of structures used for educational purposes. These ranged from school buildings of one, two, three, four or more rooms, to gymnasiums and/or auditoriums, to teacherages, to home economic cottages, and to bus barns. Buildings used for various community and governmental purposes were also constructed. Among these were city halls, a county courthouse, jails, libraries, multi-purpose community buildings and agriculture buildings. State National Guard armories constituted another type of useful structure as did those associated with conservation and water quality activities.

In addition to public buildings, WPA workers also constructed numerous outdoor recreational facilities. Athletic fields and stadiums constituted one type of this genera of work. Park pavilions, caretaker houses and swimming pools represented three others.

A third category of WPA construction types included cemetery improvements. Among these were fences, pavilions and water storage facilities.

The parameters of using supervised but unskilled, relief roll workers and of pursuing projects that were labor intensive impacted the architectural style of structures completed by the WPA. Specifically they had to be simple in design and uncomplicated in construction technique. In the case of most school buildings of four rooms or less, for example, sponsors selected free construction plans and specifications from a catalog provided by the School House Planning Division of the Oklahoma State Department of Education. Since the range of options was limited, completed school buildings, wherever their location, were similar, if not identical, in style. Classroom facilities were one story, generally rectangular structures with hipped or gable roofs. Entryways were centrally or laterally located depending upon whether the structure was one, two, three or four rooms. The sameness of style pertains despite the nature of building materials. Gymnasiums and other educational facilities were constructed according to catalog plans as well, and with the same results. National Guard armories had similar if not identical styles: a central section with a high ceiling and arched roof and a single story extension on one or both sides covered by a flat roof with parapets. Other WPA projects produced structures identifiable as to style but more for their architectural features than their commonality of design.

In general, WPA buildings were vernacular in architectural style, although there were allusions to or imitations of academic forms. Drawn from catalog plans, rural school buildings of four rooms or less referred to Richardsonian Romanesque themes with rough cut stone, smaller window openings and arched entryways. For rural areas to have a preference for and look backward to previous styles seems symbolically appropriate for Southeastern Oklahoma during the 1930s. On the other hand, urban areas (defined as population concentrations of 1000 or more) frequently alluded to modern, futuristic art deco styles in angular roof extensions, pilasters, poured concrete construction materials and incising. These features were particularly apparent in city and county office buildings as well as National Guard armories. Urban architectural styles, therefore, tended to be lighter and more upbeat, while rural styles were heavier, almost oppressive in character.

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The parameters of the program also dictated the scale of WPA structures. At any one time sponsors of projects had to supply from 10 to 25 per cent of total construction costs, a stipulation difficult to meet regardless of amount given the depressed economic conditions in Southeastern Oklahoma. Moreover, WPA national guidelines limited the amount of federal participation to some \$52,000. Both factors meant that the scale of most construction projects was generally modest. Largest in size were the National Guard armories. Most common were school classroom buildings of four rooms or less. Yet in any given community, but especially those in rural areas, the WPA building of whatever type could easily be one of the largest.

If external factors determined scale, style and type, they also enjoined the nature of building materials used on WPA projects. Sponsors generally contributed their portion of construction costs in the form of materials (the agency supplied the labor and supervision). Since most had very limited resources, these materials were of local origin and valued by the WPA in such a way as to meet the required match. Most frequently used construction materials in Southeastern Oklahoma was native sandstone, generally quarried in the vicinity of a particular project by WPA crews. At the building site, the stone was utilized in uncut or cut form. If the latter, the blocks were usually rusticated. Wood bracing and roofing materials were generally secured locally as well. Occasionally, native stone was not available or sponsor funds were sufficient to pay for other types of construction materials. At those times wood, brick or concrete were utilized. WPA structures not of native stone, however, were exceptions and thus unique to the program.

Because laborers had to be drawn from those on relief rolls, workmanship on projects was affected. Destitute miners and agriculturalists had few skills as masons, carpenters or quarry workers. Despite the best efforts of skilled supervisors, workmanship in the early stages of the program or in remote areas at any time tended to be crude, especially the masonry. The agricultural building at Dustin in Hughes County and the school building at Tipton Ridge in Pittsburg County are but two examples. At these locations the stones were cut into uneven blocks and were laid with little regard to line or course. Over time, significantly, workmanship improved. Stones were uniformly cut, rusticated and placed, visual relief being provided by different sized and colored stones. The city library at Heavener in LeFlore County and the high school at Kemp in Bryan County reflect the more mature and higher level workmanship. In structures of uncut and undressed native stone, usually of the later period, one finds on the part of masons a sense of play or delight in doing. This quality is achieved by careful placement of stone according to size and color. The school building at Tuskahoma in Pushmataha County, the armory at Hugo in Choctaw County, and the athletic stadium at Holdenville in Hughes County are excellent examples of this type of masonry.

According to one sponsor, workmanship on WPA structures was much "better than anticipated." Two factors explain why. First, quality improved as unskilled laborers gained experience on any one job and from job to job. Second, given depressed economic conditions, the WPA program was less concerned with productivity than "useful" employment. This translated into time, time for the workers to do their construction jobs right—to make the rock fit perfectly or to tear down a wall that was not plumb and to

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build it again. At Moyers in Pushmataha County one stone in the front facade of the gym took four days to hoist and place. With some exceptions, therefore, WPA workmanship in Southeastern Oklahoma was of remarkable quality.

In the nomination area, therefore, a distinctive WPA architecture is readily identifiable. It is primarily associated with structures of public usefulness such as school buildings, community and recreational facilities, armories and cemetery improvements. These facilities are almost always of modest size and monetary value, constructed of native sandstone, and of better than average workmanship. WPA architecture differs from other depression era architecture primarily in terms of scale, materials and type of worker. The Public Works Administration (PWA) funded larger projects of more than \$100,000 in value, utilized materials imported from beyond the local community and used both contract supervisors and laborers. It also produced buildings with clear reference to academic architectural styles, especially art deco. The PWA was designed to stimulate business, while the WPA was organized to feed the hungry by providing useful work. The former produced an architecture of the well-to-do; the latter an architecture of the poor. Both are unique and distinctive, but WPA architecture, in fact and symbolically, is especially suited for Southeastern Oklahoma.

The survey of the nomination area was conducted in May, June and July of 1984. The single surveyor was W. David Baird, Professor of History at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. In advance of the survey itself, Baird reviewed the National Archives microfilm edition of the "Index to Reference Cards for Works Project Administration Project Files, 1935-1942" to identify specific projects in the eleven county region. The substantial list that resulted was refined by reference to the papers of Senator Elmer Thomas in the Western History Collection at the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, and to the "Community Improvement Appraisal Reports" on the work of the WPA conducted in 1938 and housed in the Documents Sections of the Edmon Low Library at Oklahoma State University. Only after the completion of this research work did the actual, field survey begin.

Every site in the eleven county area to which there had been a reference of a WPA building was visited. That effort enabled the surveyor to determine whether a structure or facility remained extant, and if it did to document its current condition. Additional structures were often identified by residents of the community; those too were visited and evaluated. Doubtlessly some sites were missed, but there could not have been many. Altogether at least 635 properties were surveyed and assessed.

The survey also involved investigation of many WPA construction sites of other than public buildings, recreational facilities and cemetery improvements. The agency's massive employment program produced in the state at large 2712 bridges and viaducts, 50,306 culverts, 585 miles of curbs, and 68 miles of gutter. Its laborers built 236 miles of malarial control ditches, 94,644 sanitary privies and a whole host of water and sewage facilities. A fair number of all of these were located in Southeastern Oklahoma, a sizeable proportion of which the surveyor visited. Even though the largest percentage of WPA labor was assigned to the construction of these and similar projects, they are not

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included in this nomination. To have done so would have made the nomination more unmanageable than it is. Also most structures of facilities of these types have outlived their usefulness, excepting some of the bridges and culverts along county roads and curbing and guttering in smaller communities. Thus, the more prosaic legacy of the WPA has been excluded while its most obvious one has been included: public buildings, recreational facilities and cemetery improvements.

But not all structures a part of the "obvious" legacy are included within this nomination. Of the 635 properties surveyed and assessed, 477 were not considered suitable for inclusion on the National Register. Most of these were in ruins, a decayed condition or hopelessly altered. One hundred and nine of the properties were determined not eligible for nomination to the National Register at this time due to ages of less than fifty years. This thematic nomination, therefore, includes 49 properties containing 59 contributing resources. The latter retained their structural and architectural integrity and were at least in a good state of repair. Within the local, usually rural community they were unique in terms of architectural types, materials of construction and qualities of workmanship. At times they were distinguished because of architectural features unusual for WPA structures. No building or group of buildings, however, was excluded merely because it or they replicated or were identical to other buildings within the survey area. In such cases the structures in question were almost always integral parts of different communities, even though they might be located in the same county.

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CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES:

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>
Building	48
Structure	11
Site	0
Object	0

NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES:

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>
Building	0
Structure	0
Site	0
Object	0

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1935-1943

Builder/Architect

See continuation sheets

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

WPA public buildings, recreational facilities and cemetery improvements are significant because they are monuments to a program that significantly reduced the economic and social distress of the national depression of the 1930s in Southeastern Oklahoma's eleven southeastern counties. Additionally, WPA structures provided long-lasting educational, military, recreational and conservation benefits for the region. Finally, the building program left a legacy of architecture recognizable by type, style, scale, materials and workmanship.

WPA buildings, facilities and improvements were constructed principally between 1935 and 1940, although the agency itself continued through 1943. Few structures, therefore, are 50 years old. Yet all WPA construction projects were a part of a major historical epoch that profoundly and permanently affected the development of the American nation. Scholarly literature abounds that documents and evaluates the significance of the depression era and the exceptional importance of the WPA as a programmatic response to it. The unique quality of the architecture produced by the work of the agency has been assessed to a lesser degree, especially when compared to that of the Public Works Administration (PWA) or the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). At the same time, its exceptional character has been recognized by none other than the Keeper of the National Register by the addition of Timberline Lodge on the slopes of Mount Hood, Oregon, to the list of historic places.

Surprisingly, there has been no comprehensive, scholarly study of the WPA and its work in Oklahoma. Indeed, the construction program of the agency has been virtually neglected by historians and other students. To provide an evaluative context for the importance of that activity for the purposes of this nomination a variety of sources were used, ranging from materials in the National Archives to depositories and libraries in Oklahoma. Most important was a comprehensive field survey of existing WPA resources in the state's eleven southeastern counties. From this data base it was then possible to make an evaluation that WPA public buildings, recreational facilities and cemetery improvements were of exceptional significance. In Southeastern Oklahoma especially, but in the nation as a whole as well, the program changed the built landscape, provided economic security to 1000s of destitute workers, and produced social reforms still evident in the region. Put simply, from 1935 to 1940, the course of history in the nomination area changed because of the WPA construction program. The essay that follows provides a more detailed exposition of this conclusion.

Oklahoma in general was especially hard hit by the depression. And within the state the southeastern counties probably suffered more than others. Several factors accounted for the negative difference. By 1930 some 62 percent of all farms in Oklahoma were tenant operated, but in the southeast it was 10 to 15 percent higher than the rest of the state. At the same time, average farm income in the nomination area was only \$848 per year, some 47 percent less than the state as a whole. Sadly the average was only 43 percent of what it had been a decade earlier. Three successive droughts early in the 1930s only added to the misery already produced by tenancy and the tilling of half fertile soil.

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Other sectors of the economy fared just as poorly. Between 1930 and 1935 coal production, almost all of which was in the southeastern counties, decreased by two-thirds. Mines closed and one-half of the total labor force of 5465 was left unemployed. The absence of much of a market for timber products virtually closed down the forest industry. And from 1927 on bank failures occurred with increasing rapidity in the southeastern counties.

By 1932 economic distress in the nomination area was severe. In Pittsburg County that year hunger marches were frequent. In some of the eleven counties tax delinquencies reached a level of 85 percent. In all the relief rolls burgeoned, a problem compounded by an immigration of an equally destitute population from the western "dust bowl" counties of Oklahoma. By October 31, 1934, 50 to 90 percent of all families were on relief. Indeed, 21 percent of all Oklahoma families on relief rolls were in the eleven southeastern counties, although those same counties had only 12.6 percent of the state's total population. Truly the situation was desperate.

If the region was deprived economically, the same was true socially and culturally. For reasons explicable in its geographical isolation and historical development, the southeastern counties as a whole suffered from educational lethargy. Two particulars illustrate this deficiency. First, the region had the highest level of illiteracy in the state, an average of 5.4 percent as compared to 2.8 percent elsewhere. Second, there were only four public libraries in the area (Hugo, Holdenville, Durant and McAlester) possessing some 33,500 books, 66 percent of which were at McAlester. Put differently, there was only one public library book for every 10 residents of the region. The educational problem was compounded by the extent of rural isolation. The number of farm families having telephones, for example, ranged by county from 13 percent to only 3.6 percent.

The cultural and social deprivation of the southeastern counties was also reflected in their public health profile. They had the highest numbers of deaths from malaria in the state, with two counties having more than 50 per 100,000 population. The state average was less than five. Each death represented 100 to 200 different cases. Six of the counties had a higher incidence of death from typhoid than the rest of the state. Tuberculosis was a particular problem for four of the counties.

Ill economically, educationally, and physically—to say nothing of spirit or morale—the population of southeastern Oklahoma was in dire circumstances in 1935. Fortunately, the Works Progress Administration afforded timely assistance. Created on May 6, 1935, the WPA was a program of the federal government designed to provide employment at useful work for employable persons on public relief rolls. The agency's initial allocation was \$1.2 billion; through June 1943 it received some \$10.75 billion. Of the latter amount more than \$185 million was expended in Oklahoma. In the state as elsewhere the WPA sponsored a number of different programs for the unemployed. Among these were the Federal Art Project, the Federal Writer's Project, the Historical Records Survey, the Federal Music Project and the Federal Theater Project. Additionally, the WPA had programs for adult education, nursery schools, school lunches, library services, seamstresses, housekeepers and hospital aides. Few of these, however, were designed to provide employment for unskilled laborers, that class of persons who made up the largest percentage of the relief rolls in Oklahoma and its

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southeastern counties. For such individuals the WPA organized a massive construction program of public buildings and facilities. Because of its size of operation, the character of work it performed and its 75 percent share of the total budget, the latter benefitted more of Oklahoma's unemployed, had a greater impact socially, and left a physical legacy more apparent than sister programs. The construction program of the WPA is the particular focus of this nomination.

The WPA in Oklahoma was entirely a federal government operation. Organized into one statewide, eight district and fourteen area offices, it was administered by officials who answered directly to supervisors in Washington, D. C. The agency determined eligibility of persons seeking employment, selected workers of the type needed, set the wage scale to be paid, and saw to it that Federal Treasury checks were issued for work accomplished. Construction projects undertaken by the WPA were planned and sponsored by local governmental units, which also shared in the costs—an average of 25 percent statewide by 1940. Although there were exceptions, in general sponsors of these activities provided materials while the agency supplied a supervised labor force. National guidelines dictated that particular projects be "useful" and limited in cost to \$52,000 exclusive of local matching funds or equivalencies.

Between 1935 and 1943, when the agency was abolished, the WPA public works program in Southeastern Oklahoma undertook a myriad of state and locally sponsored projects. Most numerous were those involving construction of roads and streets, bridges and culverts, and sidewalks and curbs. Equally impressive were those relating to sanitation and public health, especially malarial control ditches, sanitary privies, and water treatment and delivery systems. Other projects included conservation and flood control dams, pasture terraces and gully control work, and airports and runways. More visible, although requiring a smaller percentage of the total labor force, were public buildings, recreational facilities and cemetery improvements. Aside from sidewalks and culverts, these latter projects today are the ones most generally associated with the work of the WPA.

Symbolically and concretely, the significance of this legacy can hardly be overestimated. The public buildings, recreational facilities and cemetery improvements suggest the economic importance of the total WPA construction program in Southeastern Oklahoma. When employable persons had no jobs and faced the spectre of starvation, the WPA provided meaningful work and some financial security. The \$31.20 per month paid unskilled workers was not much, but it was the margin between life and death. And it was just as important for the community collectively. Of the 51,292 monthly average of WPA workers employed in Oklahoma between 1935 and 1941, some 28 percent, or 14,361, resided in the southeastern counties. Their collective salaries poured nearly one half a million dollars a month into the local economies. Without this infusion, the city manager of McAlester said at the time, "half of the business houses here would be closed." And the mayor of Hartshorne noted that the program was "the economic salvation" of his community.

There was economic benefit beyond wage payments. In its public building program the WPA utilized unskilled workmen as masons and carpenters. Over time they learned the crafts and at a later date entered the employed work force as skilled laborers. The evidence of this

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transition is visible in a tour of Southeastern Oklahoma: one is struck by the number of private houses and business structures constructed of native stone in WPA "style." Of the overall economic impact of the program, the McCurtain County commissioners observed that before it began the people were reduced to "begging, not for charity, but for a chance to earn a living for themselves and their dependents. The WPA has offered them that opportunity."

The structures included within this nomination are also significant from a social/humanitarian perspective. In 1935, according to one observer in Spiro in LeFlore County, "the morale /of the people/ had become as bad as could be without an explosion of some kind." Another from McCurtain County noted that residents were "depressed and bewildered," "helpless and dependent" and "at their row's end." Indeed, they "had lost their selfpride and...were aimlessly walking the highways." Early depression programs of the Franklin Roosevelt administration had sought to address the problem, but those had relied on so-called doles or payments for work of the leaf-raking variety. The WPA, however, offered some economic security through meaningful labor on useful projects. The different approach had marked results. "The morale of the people has increased wonderfully," reported the Coal County commissioners. Others noted that "citizens...snapped out of their lethargy" and were in "better condition" with a "brighter outlook" and a "feeling of manliness." The construction program, wrote another, had "made better men and women of us and those that once were narrow and non-progressive are now progressive and above average." In sum, said a Spiro resident, "These projects represent an investment in humanity, and are serving to salvage some of the wreckage wrought in human resources by the economic depression."

If the WPA work program itself had social/humanitarian implications, so too did specific projects. The recreational facilities included in this nomination, for example, provided Southeastern Oklahoma with vacation and weekend-outing opportunities previously unavailable. Stadiums and athletic fields enabled residents to enjoy sport events as major social occasions. That these facilities remain in use suggest their continuing social significance.

Those properties included in this nomination are especially significant educationally. As the Atoka County superintendent of education noted in 1938: "If it were not for the WPA school projects many of our school buildings would be condemned and we would be forced to close some of our rural schools." The problem was that most school districts had reached the limit of their bonded indebtedness; and further issues were impossible because assessed valuations of property had declined with the onset of the depression. The WPA school building program, therefore, was a "Godsend to educational systems." Not only were physical facilities improved, but new buildings inspired new interest in education and accommodated the teaching process. In one rural school attendance increased by 100, while at another patron support improved markedly. For a region plagued with illiteracy, such developments were almost revolutionary. Designed to admit light, to supply uncontaminated water, and to provide sanitary toilets, the new school plant aided both learning and health. In the rural areas new "teacherages" enabled the district to attract and retain quality instructors. Put differently, the WPA school buildings enabled the educational rebirth of Southeastern Oklahoma. The influence of the program remains in that in many locations the buildings are still in use.

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Among the public structures constructed by WPA labor were National Guard armories, six of which are included in this nomination. Those structures had and many continue to have military significance. Built in 1935 and 1936, they provided meeting, training and storage facilities to different units of the 45th Infantry Division. Without question the armories enabled the guard to achieve a greater degree of military efficiency and readiness. Five years later the 45th was nationalized and saw highly decorated service in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. Several of the structures still house units of the guard and contribute directly to the Nation's military preparedness.

WPA public buildings, recreational facilities and cemetery improvements in Southeastern Oklahoma have considerable architectural significance. They are unique in terms of their numbers, especially school buildings and recreational facilities. Throughout Oklahoma 1010 new schools were constructed during the life of the WPA, 12.5 percent of all of those constructed nationwide. South Carolina had 715 schools constructed, but all other states had less than one-half of the Oklahoma total. Probably 30 percent of the new schools within the state were in the southeastern counties. The Oklahoma WPA also constructed twice as many playgrounds and athletic fields as any other state, some 2178 altogether—a substantial portion of which was in the nomination area.

Type, style, scale, materials and workmanship also make the structures unique when compared to the rest of the built environment. They are public buildings or facilities of modest size generally constructed of cut and uncut native sandstone by unskilled laborers. Occasionally the rock is so colorful and the masonry is so exceptional that a wall becomes a work of art. With allusions to either Romanesque or art deco style, the structures are immediately recognizable as WPA sponsored projects. To that extent they are set apart from less permanent and less substantive buildings dating from other eras and emanating from more normal economic conditions.

The public buildings, recreational facilities and cemetery improvements included in this nomination are significant architecturally because they are still in use or could again be put in use. They are so sound structurally that despite style changes and increased space requirements replacement is economically indefensible. The 1938 prophecy of the superintendent of the Rattan schools has proved correct. Speaking of his new WPA building, he said: "This plant should be of use for centuries if the roof is kept repaired." Fortunately, the roof has been maintained and the Rattan school building remains an architecturally unique WPA legacy in stone.

In WPA buildings and structures rock work became an art form. Some of the better examples of this type of artistic expression is found in fences constructed of untooled and undressed native sandstone. The best examples of such fences in Southeastern Oklahoma usually surround cemeteries. It is for this reason that this nomination includes WPA improvements at selected cemeteries.

W.S. Amend, superintendent of Moyers schools in Pushmataha County, wrote of the WPA in 1938: "What its value to the community is now, and what it shall mean in the future, is inestimable." It is that inestimable legacy that lends such significance to the public

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buildings, recreational facilities, and cemetery improvements constructed by the WPA in Southeastern Oklahoma. They constitute monuments to a program of public works that for many was the margin between life and death, that changed the face of education and military preparedness, and that produced structures noted for a particular architecture. It is the inestimable legacy of the buildings and structures that justifies the present nomination.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheets

10. Geographical Data See continuation sheets

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

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 sheets

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

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. W. David Baird

organization Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey

date June 15, 1985

502 Math Science Bldg.

street & number Oklahoma State University

telephone (405) 624-5678

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

W. David Baird

date

7/12/88

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

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Section number _____ Page _____

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic GroupName _____
State _____

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

11. Coalgate School Gymnasium--
Auditorium Substantive Review

Keeper

Attest

12. Cole Chapel School Substantive Review

Keeper

Attest

13. Colony Park Pavilion Substantive Review

Keeper

Attest

14. Degan School Substantive Review

Keeper

Attest

15. Dog Creek School Substantive Review

Keeper

Attest

16. Dustin Agricultural Building
Substantive Review

Keeper

Attest

17. Fewell School Substantive Review

Keeper

Attest

18. Holdenville Armory Substantive Review

Keeper

Attest

19. Hugo Armory Substantive Review

Keeper

Attest

20. Hugo Public Library

Keeper

Attest

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

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Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic GroupName _____
State _____

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

21. Idabel Armory

~~Substantive Review~~

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest _____

22. Lee, Jeff, Park, Bath House
and Pool~~Substantive Review~~

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest _____

23. Kinta High School

~~Substantive Review~~

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest _____

24. Lee, Robert E., School

~~Substantive Review~~

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest _____

25. McAlester Armory

~~Substantive Review~~

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest _____

26. Moss School Gymnasium

~~Substantive Review~~

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest _____

27. New State School

~~Substantive Review~~

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest _____

28. Panola High School and Gymnasium

~~Substantive Review~~

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest _____

29. Pittsburg School and Gymnasium

~~Substantive Review~~

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest _____

30. Poteau Community Building

~~Substantive Review~~

Keeper

Carol D. Shull 9-8-88

Attest _____

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic GroupName _____
State _____

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

31. Poteau School Gymnasium--Auditorium
-
- Substantive Review

Keeper Carol D. Shue 9-8-88
Attest _____

32. Roberta School Campus Substantive Review

Keeper Carol D. Shue 9-8-88
Attest _____

33. Shady Point School Substantive Review

Keeper Carol D. Shue 9-8-88
Attest _____

34. Snow School

Substantive Review

Keeper Carol D. Shue 9-8-88
Attest _____

35. Spaulding School Gymnasium--
-
- Auditorium Substantive Review

Keeper Carol D. Shue 9-8-88
Attest _____

36. Speer School Substantive Review

Keeper Carol D. Shue 9-8-88
Attest _____

37. Spencerville School Campus
-
- Substantive Review

Keeper Carol D. Shue 9-8-88
Attest _____

38. Stigler School Gymnasium--
-
- Auditorium Substantive Review

Keeper Carol D. Shue 9-8-88
Attest _____

39. Stroup Park Swimming Pool and
-
- Bath House Substantive Review

Keeper return
Attest _____

40. Summerfield School Substantive Review

Keeper Carol D. Shue 9-8-88
Attest _____

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

Name _____

State _____

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

41. Valliant School

Substantive Review Keeper

Carol D. Hull 9-8-88

Attest _____

42. Tipton Ridge School

Substantive Review Keeper

Carol D. Hull 9-8-88

Attest _____

43. Tucker School

Substantive Review Keeper

Carol D. Hull 9-8-88

Attest _____

44. Twyman Park

Substantive Review

Keeper Carol D. Hull 9-8-88

Attest _____

45. Westside Elementary School

Substantive Review Keeper

return

Attest _____

46. Wetumka Armory

Substantive Review Keeper

Carol D. Hull 9-8-88

Attest _____

47. Wetumka Cemetery Pavilion and
Fence

Substantive Review

Keeper Carol D. Hull 9-8-88

Attest _____

48. Williams, Robert Lee, Public Library

Substantive Review

Keeper Carol D. Hull 9-8-88

Attest _____

49. Williams School

Substantive Review

Keeper Carol D. Hull 9-8-88

Attest _____

50.

Keeper Carol D. Hull 9-8-88

Attest _____

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: VariousDate Listed: 9/8/88Various
Property NameVarious
CountyOklahoma
StateWPA Public Buildings, Recreational Facilities and Cemetery
Improvements in Southeastern Oklahoma, 1935-1943 TR
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Carol D. Shuck
Signature of the Keeper

9-8-88
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

The actual resource count for the entire multiple property nomination should be 50 contributing buildings and 9 contributing structures (no non-contributing resources). Each of the individual properties should be counted as one building with the following exceptions: Roberta School Campus--2 buildings; Spencerville School Campus--2 buildings; Stroup Park Swimming Pool and Bathhouse--1 building, 1 structure; Wetumka Cemetery Pavilion and Fence--2 structures; Twyman Park--2 buildings, 4 structures; Jeff Lee Park Bathhouse and Pool--1 building, 1 structure; and Colony Park Pavilion--1 structure. (Stroup Park Swimming Pool and Bathhouse is being returned to the OK SHPO because of substantive problems which must be clarified.)

Scipio School--Ownership should be private, not public.

Roberta School Campus--Acreage should be two, not less than two.

The level of significance for all properties is local.

The above information was confirmed during a 9/8/88 telephone conversation with Oklahoma Deputy SHPO Melvena Heisch.

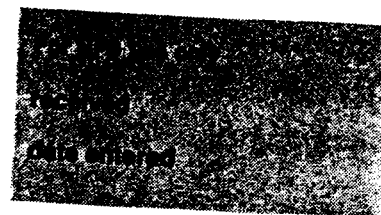
DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file

Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number various

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ROBERT LEE WILLIAMS PUBLIC LIBRARY

LOCATION: Fourth and Beech Streets, Durant, Oklahoma 040, Bryan County 013

CLASSIFICATION: building; public; public acquisition--N/A; occupied; unrestricted; present use--library

OWNER: City of Durant, City Hall, Durant, OK 74701

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Bryan County Courthouse, Durant, OK 74701

DESCRIPTION: excellent condition; unaltered; original site

The Williams Library is a single story, L-shaped (82' x 52' vertically with a 25' x 27' horizontal extension) structure constructed of native limestone blocks and buff colored bricks. The quality of masonry is excellent. Brick is restricted to the rear, outside wall. The roof is flat with parapets, while singly placed metal casement windows rise to the height of interior ceilings. A decorative frieze just above the window openings and pilasters between the windows and beside the front entry give the library building a distinct art deco style.

SIGNIFICANCE: 1936; architect/builder: unknown

As a WPA building, the Williams Library is distinctive because of its clear art deco style and the use of limestone as a building material. Moreover, it is the only WPA structure specifically and originally dedicated to library purposes in the nomination area. Style and building materials make it unique in the community of Durant, as does its architectural type and characteristics of workmanship. Most significant is that the building provided employment opportunities for destitute laborers at a time when starvation was the only alternative.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA:

Acreage: Less than one acre

Quadrangle: Durant South, Okla.
1:24,000/7.5 min.

UTM: 14 742120 3764320

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: Lots 3 and 4, Block 151, Durant City original

PICTURE REFERENCE: 17-A, 17-B

OKLAHOMA-BRYAN CO.

7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

NW/4 DURANT 15' QUADRANGLE

Robert Lee William
Public Library
Durant, Oklahoma
UTM: 14 742120 3764320

