

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Civic Center
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Johnstone Ave. Between 6th St. & Adams Blvd. NA not for publication
city, town Bartlesville NA vicinity
state Oklahoma code OK county Washington code 147 zip code 74003

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

☐ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☒ 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 ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official David L. FoleyDate 11/15/89

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other, (explain): _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION/AUDITORIUM

GOVERNMENT/CITY HALL

EDUCATION/LIBRARY

Current Function (enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/LIBRARY

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

CLASSICAL REVIVAL

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK/STONE

roof ASPHALT

other MARBLE/TILE

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SUMMARY/CONTEXT

The Civic Center is a three-level structure built in 1922-23 at the south edge of Bartlesville's downtown district on the original townsite. Facing west with a dignified frontage on Johnstone Avenue, the building was designed as a convention hall and theatre with space for an armory, drill hall, banquet and civic club rooms. Its architecture is dominantly Neo-Classic Revival with elements and details of the Beaux Arts period. The plan elevation is in the shape of a short, bold "T" (1) with ground level, first and second floors formed with reinforced concrete, exterior brick and stone trim. During 65 years, the only significant exterior alteration was the library addition to the north wing in 1962. Only this wing remains open since the city offices in the Civic Center were vacated in 1976. Alterations and continuing damages from a leaking roof have not seriously affected either the historic or architectural integrity of the building.

LOCATION DESCRIPTION

Situated on the west half of the block bounded by Johnstone and Dewey avenues and by Sixth Street and Adams Boulevard, the Civic Center is in the geographic heart of the city. Three original combined lots provide a 300-foot frontage on Johnstone Avenue facing west, and the property extends 140 feet eastward to a 20-foot paved alley. The building is 206 feet wide at its front elevation and 128 feet in depth front-to-back. It overlooks the downtown #1 fire station and a funeral home on the west; a church parking lot on the north; a telephone building and municipal parking on the east; and a residential area to the south. The official property description is Section 12, 26 North, 12 East; Block 55, Lots 4, 5, and 6; Original Bartlesville Townsite.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

Most of the elements of the Civic Center front facade are Neo-Classic Revivals of The Classic Ideal as rendered in monumental buildings described in The Practical Book of Architecture. The same book describes elements and details of the Beaux Arts period, a few of which are also present in the Civic Center principal facade.

☒ See continuation sheet

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The street level of the building's central section is accentuated with a heavy stone base and a flat, stone wall punctuated with recessed arches framing double-hung French windows. There are also recessed openings for three central section entrances, all with double French doors and surmounted with metal-and-glass marquees which were added several years after the building was completed (2). The ground-level floor is topped with a heavy stonecourse that supports an arcade of tall arched windows on the main floor or "premier étage" and a massive Palladian window stretching up over two floors with it's keystone touching the entablature (3). The main floor stonecourse also supports bases for a series of Corinthian pilasters rising to the entablature decorated with plain medallions in low relief and centered over each capital. Little space remains in the central section for red matt faced brick in the flat wall between pilasters. Crowning the building's central facade is a typical Neo-Classic, uncluttered balustrade as described in American Architecture Since 1780. The name CIVIC CENTER in low relief on a placard is engaged with balusters directly over the center Palladian window.

The principal facade of the south wing is a Neo-Classic derivation of Greek Revival features described in American Architecture Since 1780. Four pilasters (mimicking engaged columns) rise from a ground-level stonecourse to an entablature and unadorned, low-gabled pediment. The second floor of the north wing has the same appearance and construction as the south wing except upper windows have been filled in with pre-cast rought concrete slabs. Original lower floor west windows were displaced with a slightly zig-zag wall of redbud bricks plus a planter in a 1962 library expansion. The only natural lighting for the library is from a continuous four-pane window centered on the north wall. A view of the rear elevation (4) shows the enormous box-like area encompassing the stage tower, auditorium and balcony. Devoid of design, these vast brick areas are interrupted only by rear stage and basement doors and dressing room windows.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

Inside the front entrance, a red-tiled vestibule opens through double French doors and down a ramp to an 80 by 100-foot room which once served as a banquet and drill hall. Also from the first floor vestibule, wide marble stairways on both sides lead to the main floor vestibule and a triple-arch loggia, a Palladian feature used in many Neo-Classic buildings as discussed in American Architecture 1607-1976. Through the arches a wide corridor connects with both north and south wings, meeting rooms, restrooms and two main entrances to the auditorium. Cantilevered construction of the bowl-shape balcony (5) and auditorium allows an unobstructed view from 1150 auditorium seats and 700 balcony seats. Matching triple-arch loggias with banisters and ornamented spandrels lead to exits on both sides of the auditorium. In front of the stage, seating accommodates a 24-piece orchestra. Imposing Corinthian pilasters grace each side of a 58 by 25-foot proscenium opening. The stage is large enough for intramural basketball or for social dancing. Seventeen dressing rooms on two floors surround the stage. Entry to lower balcony seats is by a center double door from the second floor corridor. Upper balcony seats are accessible from entrances of both sides at the back which were added in 1930 (6).

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CONSTRUCTION FEATURES

The Civic Center was ahead of its time structurally with its thin-shell, folded-plate and cantilever construction which added strength to the balcony while eliminating a lot of dead weight. This feature is described in detail in Structural Design in Architecture and shown in a 1922 construction scene (7). The main auditorium and stage roof are concrete with an overlay of seven-ply Barber Asphalt Standard all carried on steel trusses. The gabled roofs on both wings are covered with asphalt shingles. Cosmetic damage to the interior is the result of a leaking roof, but vast expanses of outside wall space show no evidence of shifting or mortar loss. The foundation on bedrock and reinforced concrete construction throughout have allowed the building to stand the test of time during 65 years.

The auditorium was designed with an excellent system of natural ventilation by convective air currents. Air entered at relatively cool ground-floor intakes rising through holes in the composite floor (reinforced concrete plus structural clay tile) and then through ventilators under the seats to flow upward through the auditorium. In winter, heat was provided by use of oil burners and one of the most modern heating systems of the time. It was a low-pressure, two-pipe vacuum system with heat registers throughout the building. Only the auditorium was heated by forced air brought through tempering coils, passed into the air space under the floor and up into the auditorium through the underseat ventilators. Other mechanical systems included drinking fountains with ice cold water furnished from a cistern in the basement which had a special cooling system. Automatic fire doors protected the stage and other vital entryways. An asbestos stage curtain protected the auditorium. Fire hydrants installed throughout the building provided firehose connections every seventy-five feet. North and south outside fire escapes provided exits from all floors.

ALTERATIONS

Both minor and major alterations were made throughout the years; for accoustical ceilings, five metal-and-glass marquees, and marble stairways for two more balcony entrances in 1930; for remodeling upper and lower floors of the south wing to provide space for all city offices except fire, police and jail facilities in 1931-32; and the major library expansion of the north wing in 1962. Despite these changes, the Civic Center retains a high degree of architectural integrity both inside and out because the overall symmetry of the structure was affected only in the lower floor changes of the north wing.

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NOTES

- 1) Bartlesville City Engineering Files. Lot and Ground Floor plans. 28 Apr. 1922.
- 2) Sears, T. Only architect's drawing showing entrance marquees. Circa 1931-32.
- 3) Bartlesville City Engineering Files. Front elevation. 28 Apr. 1922.
- 4) Bartlesville City Engineering Files. Rear Elevation. 28 Apr. 1922.
- 5) Bartlesville City Engineering Files. Balcony and Second Floor plans. 28 Apr. 1922.
- 6) Bartlesville Morning Examiner. 8 July 1930. p. 1.
- 7) Bartlesville Public Library. Folded-plate construction in progress. 1922.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1923-1938

Significant Dates

1923

1927

1932

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Barnett, George D., and Company

Bellows, W.S.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SUMMARY

The Bartlesville Civic Center is historically architecturally significant to this northeastern Oklahoma city. It served as the cultural center for the community from its construction in 1923 until it closed in 1976. It also served as the seat of city government from 1932 until 1976. Also, the Civic Center is a representative example of the Neo-Classical style in Bartlesville.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

According to newspaper accounts Bartlesville's need for a public building was first envisioned as a national guard armory (8), some say as a memorial to those who lost their lives in World War I (9), (10), (11). After extensive study by many civic groups, the consensus was that a public meeting place should be built to satisfy the needs of all citizens. In 1921, the people approved \$300,000 in bonds to erect a convention hall and theatre to be called the Bartlesville Civic Center (12). Deeds for three lots on Johnstone Avenue to provide a building site were acquired by the city for \$31,500 in 1921 (13), (14).

Original building plans dated April 28, 1922 by the St. Louis architectural firm of Barnett, Hayes, Barnett, Inc., were presented by George Barnett in May of 1922 (15). A subsequent scandal involving bids required new plans which were approved in July, and Oklahoma City contractor, W.S. Bellows, finally started construction on October 4, 1922 (16). The cornerstone was laid January 12, 1923 and the building was completed in mid-September (17). The Civic Center opened to much fanfare with a three-day pageant "Oklahoma" on November 12, 13 and 14, 1923 (18), (19).

☐ See continuation sheet

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In 1927 when the Carnegie Public Library outgrew its quarters at Seventh Street and Osage Avenue, the library was moved to the Civic Center north wing in October, 1927 (19). Bonds for an extensive \$265,000 library expansion of 10,000 square feet were approved in 1960 (20). Another \$35,000 was donated for an exhibit hall and history room. Buck and Associates were the architects. Powell Construction Company of Tulsa was the contractor (21). The brick and concrete addition was finished in late 1961 and the open house for the completed expansion was January 21, 1962 (22). The Civic Center has been home for the public library for sixty-one years.

The Civic Center, except for the public library, was closed in 1976 (23).

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

During the Civic Center's period of significance from 1923 to 1938, it was clearly the cultural and recreated center of the community. According to the Washington County Historical Society, Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise and A History of Bartlesville, famous performers included Helen Hayes, Will Rogers, Harry Lauder, Ethel Barrymore, Thomas E. Dewey and Admiral Richard Byrd (24),(25). The Civic Center stage hosted Broadway cast productions of Tobacco Road, Green Pastures, Desert Song, Rose Marie, Taming of the Shrew and Ziegfeld follies (26). Equally famous performances included concerts by the U.S. Navy Band, John Philip Sousa and Paul Whiteman with his orchestra.

Starting in 1926, amateur theatricals by the Bartlesville Little Theatre Group continued right up until city fathers closed the building in 1976. In addition, there were operas, lectures, ballets, antique shows, Barbershop quartets, and jazz-era dancing. For youngsters there were indoor circuses, puppet shows, movies and sports activities. At annual Christmas parties there was a sack of hard candy and a new silver dollar for every child from the town's philanthropist and oil man, "Uncle" Frank Phillips.

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

The Bartlesville City Hall was located at Fourth Street and Dewey Avenue from 1909 to 1932 (27) when all city offices, except the fire department, police station and jail facilities, were moved to the remodeled Civic Center building on Johnstone (28). The move was made to save the cost of double building maintenance. All City facilities in the old building on Dewey were abandoned in 1950 when it was sold. It burned in 1979, was shortly demolished (29), and is now a parking lot. The Civic Center remained the seat of city government for forty-four years from 1932 to 1976 when city fathers abandoned it as unsafe and moved one block east to present quarters at Sixth Street and Dewey Avenue.

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ARCHITECTURE

Architectural significance, under criterion "C" of Applicable National Register Criteria, is justified by the fact that the Civic Center is a representative example of the Neo-Classic Revival style in Bartlesville. During the sixty-five years since it was completed in 1923, only the library addition to the lower floor of the north wing has changed the outside appearance of the building. The effects of this alteration and continuing cosmetic damage to the interior from a leaking roof have not destroyed the building's overall historic appearance or its architectural integrity.

CURRENT STATUS

Most of the Civic Center has stood empty for twelve years since 1976. On April 18, 1988 the city voted to demolish the building and build a new library on the Civic Center site. A district court case to save the building was dismissed. Subsequently, a citizen's initiative petition, calling for a vote of the people before demolition of the building, was accepted by the Bartlesville City Council as valid. The building's fate will be decided in a special or regular election no later than April, 1989.

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NOTES

- 8) Bartlesville Daily Enterprise. 11 Nov. 1923. p. 1.
- 9) Debo, A. The WPA Guide to 1930s Oklahoma. University Press of Kansas. Lawrence. 1941. pp. 133, 134.
- 10) Ruth, K. A Guide to the Sooner State. University of Oklahoma Press. Norman. 1941. p. 145.
- 11) Bartlesville Wednesday Morning American. 25 Sept. 1985. p. 3.
- 12) Bartlesville Public Library. City ordinance to issue \$300,000 in bonds for convention hall and community house. 14 Mar. 1921.
- 13) Bartlesville Morning Examiner. 16 Dec. 1921. p. 1.
- 14) Register of Deeds, Washington County, Oklahoma. Deeds Records. 1922.
- 15) Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise. 8 Aug. 1984. p. 1.
- 16) Bartlesville Morning Examiner. 12 Jan. 1923. p. 1.
- 17) Bartlesville Daily Enterprise. 11 Nov. 1923. p. 1.
- 18) Bartlesville Morning Examiner. 11 Nov. 1923. Sec. C. pp. 1, 2.
- 19) Bartlesville Daily Enterprise. 3 Oct. 1927. p. 1.
- 20) Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise. 25 May 1960. p. 1.
- 21) Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise. 6 Dec. 1960. p. 1.
- 22) Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise. 21, Jan. 1961. p. 19
- 23) Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise. 10 Aug. 1976. p. 1.
- 24) Washington County Historical Society. Letter. 27 Nov. 1985.
- 25) Williams, J. Bartlesville. Reda Pump Division of TRW Inc. 1978. p. 93.
- 26) Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise. 5 Jan. 1982. p. 1.
- 27) Bartlesville Public Library. History Room. Circa. 1924.
- 28) Bartlesville Morning Examiner. 18 May 1932.
- 29) Bartlesville Examiner-Enterprise. 1 Aug. 1979.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
has been 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 # _____

☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A

1	5	2	3	4	1	5	0	4	0	7	0	7	5	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

C

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

B

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D

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

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Original Town of Bartlesville, Lots 4, 5 and 6, Block 55.

☒ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the Civic Center is the same parcel historically associated with the property.

☒ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carlos Melton

organization NA date November 29, 1988

street & number 1119 S. Johnstone Avenue telephone (918) 336-4454

city or town Bartlesville state OK zip code 74003

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bartlesville Daily Enterprise. 11 Nov. 1923. p. 1.
- Bartlesville Morning Examiner. 17 June, 1923. p. 1; 11 Nov. 1923. pp. 1,2.
- Bartlesville Public Library. (History Room). Construction photograph. 1922;
Completed Civic Center. Circa 1925.
- City Engineering Records. Reductions of original Civic Center architect's drawings
from microfiche. 28 Apr. 1922.
- Compton, H. Original-size plans of Civic Center front elevation, ground floor, first
floor, and second floor. 28 Apr. 1922.
- Debo, A. The WPA Guide to 1930s Oklahoma. University Press of Kansas. Lawrence,
1941. pp. 133, 134.
- Price, C. Matlock. The Practical Book of Architecture. Lippincott. Washington
Square Press. Philadelphia, 1916. p. 100.
- Register of Deeds, Washington County, Oklahoma. Deeds Records. 1922.
- Ruth, K. A Guide to the Sooner State. University of Oklahoma Press. Norman, 1941.
p. 145.
- Salvadori, M. and Levy, M. Structural Design in Architecture. Prentice-Hall.
Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1967. pp. 259-266. Chapter 12, Sec. 12.5.
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- Whiffen, M. American Architecture 1780. The M.I.T. Press. Cambridge and London,
1969. p.p. 167-171.
- Whiffen, M. and Koeper, F. American Architecture Since 1607-1976. The M.I.T. Press.
Cambridge, 1981. p.p. 103-123.
- Williams, J. Bartlesville. Reda Pump Division of TRW Inc. 1978. p. 93.



Civic Center

