

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 Oklahoma Historical Society Building
other names/site number Wiley Post Historical Building

2. Location

street & number 2100 Lincoln Boulevard N/A not for publication
city, town Oklahoma City N/A vicinity
state Oklahoma code OK county Oklahoma code 109 zip code 73105

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>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number 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]
Signature of certifying official

1-12-90
Date

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): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture/Museum

Education/Library

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture/Museum

Education/Library

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Stone/Limestone

Stone/Granite

roof Asphalt

other Metal Entry

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SUMMARY/CONTEXT

Constructed in 1929-1930, the Wiley Post Historical Building is a three-story granite and limestone building with a full basement. Granite from Georgia is used for the base and steps; Indiana limestone on the facade. The firm of Layton, Hicks, and Forsyth was responsible for the Neo-classical design. The building, located one block southeast of the State Capitol, is on a large two-block lot and is elevated 6 ft. above Lincoln Boulevard. The boulevard serves as the address for the capitol complex and runs parallel to the entry to the building. The Capitol-Lincoln Terrace Historic District (NR 1976), an elegant neighborhood of two- and three- story houses built during the oil boom of the 20's, surrounds the society to the rear. The exterior of the building has remained virtually untouched through the years and continues to retain its original architectural integrity.

The building is Neo-classical in style; its front facade is dominated by ten tapered, two-story columns with Ionic capitals. The columns are enclosed beneath a large entablature supported by square limestone end-columns. Centered below the entablature is inscribed in stone - OKLAHOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY. Three decorative wreaths, typical of academic institutions, are located on either side.

Above the inscription and the wreaths, are egg and dart moulding, and dentils running along the lower edge of the cornice. Lion masks, a frequent motif in classical decoration, are also a part of the wide frieze. The antefix, on the very top edge of the entablature, is modeled after the anthemions (flowers) used as a motif throughout the building.

The ten columns form a shallow porch with a beamed ceiling rising above. Short stone balustrades connect each of the columns and form the rail of the porch. Symmetrically placed at the top of the stairs and the center of the porch are the two bronze doors which serve as an entrance to the Oklahoma Historical Society. Above the doors is a clerestory with a decorative iron grille. Surrounding the entrance and supporting an entablature are stone relief panels with an antefix which mimics the antefix of the main entablature on the front facade. Again, the egg and dart design and dentils are used for decoration on the entablature. Vertebrate bands of leaves alternate with medallions modelled after flowers on the vertical stone relief panels on either side of the entrance.

Two flights of wide, granite steps extend toward Lincoln Boulevard from the entrance to a small brick plaza below. At the lower flight, three-dimensional volutes are on either side of the staircase. Two decorative lights (ca.1960) are located near the top of the steps on either side. A replica of the Liberty Bell, a cannon, and a small

☒ See continuation sheet

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)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1929-1939

Significant Dates

1929-30

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Layton, Hicks & Forsyth--architects

Holmboe Construction Company at

Oklahoma City

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

The Wiley Post Historical Building, constructed in 1929-30, is historically and architecturally significant. It is significant to the State of Oklahoma as the central repository for the state's history. Additionally, the building is architecturally significant as an important example of the work of Layton, Hicks, and Forsyth, a prominent early 20th century Oklahoma firm.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Oklahoma Historical Society, organized in 1893 by the Oklahoma Press Association, was modelled after the Kansas Historical Society, for at least one of its founding fathers, William P. Campbell, editor of the Hennessey Democrat, had been present when the Kansas society was initiated in 1875.

Originally the Oklahoma Historical Society was a department of the Oklahoma Press Association and the statement of intent was as follows: "The object in establishing this department is the collection of newspapers, books, and periodicals, productions of art, science and literature, matters of historic interest, etc..." William P. Campbell was appointed Custodian of the society and was later responsible for the first Mistletoe Leaves, the pioneer publication of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

Initially located in a room of the Kingfisher County Courthouse, the Society was, in the beginning, primarily concerned with preserving territorial newspapers. Campbell used the publication of Mistletoe Leaves to request missing issues as well as donations of other printed material. Early contributions included history books, literature about the University of Oklahoma, Governor's Reports, and current copies of Oklahoma law.

Two years later, in 1895, the organization moved to Norman to merge with another Society formed for the same purpose by F.S.E. Amos, an instructor of history at the University of Oklahoma, and some students. Both groups had been preparing to apply for a territorial charter; edged out by the Norman organization, the Kingfisher-based Society comprised and formed a joint society. The location was to be moved to the campus of the University of Oklahoma, but the editors of the press association received a controlling board membership. The Articles of Incorporation were granted on January 21, 1895, and a bill

☒ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1

architectural momento from a demolished Oklahoma City downtown building ornament the surrounding lawn.

From the main body of the building two singular bays extend both north and south. On either side of the single windows of the first and second floor are stone pilasters of the most plain design. This design is continued on both the side and rear elevations of each wing of the building, with single, steel casement windows and pilasters alternating. Two simple designs differentiate the windows on the front elevation; located over the first floor windows is an intricate design featuring a medallion as the focal point, and over the second floor windows a design of scrolling foliage has been applied. Each side elevation of the building is identical in design with an obvious lack of ornamentation. A single row of dentils serves as a beltcourse which encircles the entire structure.

On the front elevation of the ground floor on each wing are secondary entrances which repeat a simplified version of the design of the main doors. A simple entablature with dentils surrounds these entrances. A cross pattern is used on the iron grilles placed on the exterior of the single windows located on either side of the secondary entrances; this is similar to the clerestory grille over the main entrance. Twin light standards on either side of the two entrances combine the pattern of the grille and the anthemion.

On the northwest corner of the building is the cornerstone, with the inscription - "The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge A.F. and A.M. - Rufus O. Renfrew, Grand Master, A.L. 5929, Nov. 16, A.D. 1929." Also inscribed on the cornerstone are the following names: Gov. William J. Holloway, Layton, Hicks and Forsyth (architects); Edward P. Boyd, (Construction) Superintendent, Holmboe Construction Company, and the names of the Building Committee. Charles F. Colcord, president of the Oklahoma Historical Society at the time of construction, is also named on the stone.

The rear of the building is slightly indented between the two wings and here the window treatments and use of pilaster is discontinued. The rear windows are multi-paned and larger than the windows on both the front and side elevations. The rear facade of the building is flat although the windows are separated vertically by decorative metal panels with a scoop pattern. Because of the orientation of the busy boulevard in front and the addition of a parking lot in the rear of the building, a small singular glass and aluminum rear door serves as the major rear entrance to the building.

Interior

The interior of the Wiley Post Historical Building is an excellent example of a Neo-classical designed interior from the 1920's and 1930's. Asymmetrically arranged, the central marble staircase dominates the building's interior. Marble, oak and walnut parquet floors, decorative plaster walls with elaborate friezes, and an intricately designed iron balustrade are typical characteristics of the style. Each floor is unique; the long halls are lined with plaster pilasters which have elaborate capitals and decorative friezes.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

The archives room, auditorium, and storage areas are located in the basement. Here beamed ceilings are combined with a classical motif which uses a vertical anthemion in a repeated pattern. Dentils are used to emphasize the coffered ceiling. The intricate details of the friezes, the marble floors, and the oak doors with their leaded oval glass and leaded clerestory, create an imposing space which belies its basement location.

The auditorium remains unchanged. The ceiling, which uses architectural features typical of the Neo-classical style to their fullest extent, is the most elaborate in the building. The false entablature across the stage is decorated with swags and other classical motifs abound on every wall. Large Art Deco chandeliers hang from the ceiling. The interior finish of the auditorium, which seats 400, was restored in 1982-83.

The first floor is the main level and the location of the entrance from Lincoln Boulevard. The library, newspaper collection, and museum store are located on this floor. A small entrance vestibule, with Tennessee and Tavernelle marble floors, separates the bronze front doors from the second set of wooden double doors. These doors are trimmed in brass with an Art Deco stained glass clerestory. A frieze of scrolling foliage incorporated with dentils is located in this small, but important space. Again the plaster pilasters are used on either side of the long and spacious first floor hallway, and a wavescroll dominates the decorative frieze. Floors of marble with a pattern and a border are used on this level and all other main corridor floors throughout the building. The combination of an arched and vaulted ceiling and the wide center stairway provide an elegant reception area.

The stairway is elaborately designed with an iron balustrade of scrolling foliage and a walnut banister. The foliage design wraps around a marble newel post at each level. The stairs are marble and marble wainscotting is used on all four levels. The floor marble also extends up each wall approximately one foot as floor molding. In contrast to the classical design of the building are Art Deco light fixtures, popular during the 1920's and 30's, which are used throughout the building.

The second floor has beamed ceilings and the most elaborate frieze. Typically characteristic of the Neo-classical style, the frieze is made of plaster festoons - leaves and flowers wrapped in ribbon. The pilasters are adorned with a flattened Corinthian capital. The egg and dart molding, the dentils, and a secondary design, more indicative of the Art Deco style, is also incorporated into the design of this hall. The Confederate and Union Memorial Rooms are located on this floor. There are also offices at each end of the hall.

The third floor is distinguished by eight Indian figures painted on the walls of the hallway by Monroe Tsatoke and Spencer Ash. Tsatoke and Ash were both members of the Kiowa Five, five Kiowa Indians who became internationally known for their art work. The Indian paintings on the third floor of the Historical Society and many other paintings by the Kiowa Five are located in state and federal buildings in Oklahoma and were funded by the Civilian Work Administration in the 1930's.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 3

Originally intended as gallery space, the third floor continues in this capacity. A plain, beamed ceiling is used in the hallway on this level. Flattened Corinthian capitals, similar but not identical to those on the second floor, are used on the pilasters. The ceilings of the gallery space curve to meet the wall. A narrow metal staircase at the south end of the hall leads to the mechanical access space above the third floor.

Seventeen by seventeen foot light courts continue to light the upper halls and service rooms, as well as the lower floors of the library.

Alterations and additions

The major spaces of the interior remain virtually unchanged and continue to convey the original design of the building. With the exception of the third floor galleries where the skylights have been covered to block the sunlight from the exhibits, the private spaces and storage rooms are the only areas where changes have occurred.

On the grounds

The exhibit shop, built in 1982, is located approximately 20 feet to the rear of the north wing of the building. The exhibit building is 40' x 60' and has a stucco exterior. Large garage doors provide primary access to the building. The structure has a flat roof and is about 25' in height. Because of the age of the structure, it does not serve as a contributing resource in the nomination.

Located behind the exhibit building to the northeast is a capped oil well and artifacts related to oil. The structure was given to the Historical Society by Cities Service Gas Co. c. 1960; the well does not serve as a contributing resource in the nomination.

Directly north of the Wiley Post Historical Building is the Oklahoma American Legion War Memorial. The site was dedicated on November 11, 1969. The memorial was built in 1986 by the American Legion to honor men who served in World War I, World War II, Korean War, and Viet Nam Conflict. For each war there is a separate sculpture. In addition there is an eternal flame. Because of its age, the memorial does not serve as a contributing resource in the nomination.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

recognizing the Society's status as a territorial agency was approved on February 21, 1895. The collections were then moved to Norman.

Soon storage for the growing collection became a problem and there was also concern for its safety. In 1902 the Society moved to the third floor of the Oklahoma City Carnegie Library, the first fire-proof building in Oklahoma. Over the next fifteen years the Society's collection expanded remarkably until storage was a critical problem. In 1917 the Society was allocated space for collection storage and exhibits in the newly completed State Capitol Building.

There was competition for space in the State Capitol; and with growing state agencies and the organization's burgeoning needs, it was evident the Oklahoma Historical Society required its own building. Judge Robert L. Williams, the third governor of the state and avid supporter of the Oklahoma Historical Society, promoted a bill to provide funding for a new building. The bill was approved by Governor W.J. Holloway on March 1, 1929 and by the end of the year, construction was underway. \$500,000 was allocated for the new building; the money was to come from the sale of school lands in the former Cherokee Outlet.

Williams served as the chairman of the Building Committee, which was to be responsible for the selection of the architectural and construction firms. Other committeemen included Judge Phil D. Brewer, Judge Thomas H. Doyle, Judge W.A. Ledbetter, General William S. Key, Dan W. Peery, and Jasper Sipes. The building's classical design was influenced by the Building Committee's fact-finding expedition to several cities across the country. The committee selected the design of the Minnesota Historical Society Building in St. Paul as a prototype for the Oklahoma Historical Society's new building.

The building was designed to house a library, a newspaper reading room, work rooms, memorial galleries, and additional gallery space for museum exhibits and portraits, and office space for staff. Edward P. Boyd, the supervising architect for the project, described the finished product in detail, giving recognition to its Georgia granite, Indiana limestone, marble floors, oak and walnut parquet floors, American walnut trim, and electrically-cooled drinking fountains. All work, including landscaping, was done within the appropriated budget of \$500,000.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

As the home of the Oklahoma Historical Society, the Wiley Post Historical Building possesses statewide significance. It is in this building that the artifacts, manuscripts, books, and other records that tell the story of Oklahoma's past. Through the Society's service as a research facility, its interpretation of the state's history through museum exhibits, and its presentation of state history through publications, such as the Chronicles of Oklahoma (published since 1921), the Society educates the general public about the people and events that shaped the state's heritage. No other institution in the state serves this important function.

Many noted Oklahoma historians including Joseph Thoburn, Grant and Carolyn Thomas Foreman, Edward Everett Dale, Angie Debo, and Muriel H. Wright were all associated with the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2

Society during, before, and after the period of significance. Due to the efforts of these individuals and many others, numerous collections of primary source materials were obtained for the Society's collections. One of the finest collections of the Society is the archive of records related to Oklahoma's many Indian tribes. These records are used by scholars from around the world. The extensive newspaper collection is another of the Society's major collections.

During the 1930's the Wiley Post Historical Building became known as the center for the extensive educational efforts of the Oklahoma Historical Society for the citizens of Oklahoma.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Led by Judge Robert L. Williams, the third governor of Oklahoma, the Building Committee was determined to have the most modern facility possible. To help them make the decision about what kind of building they wanted, all members of the Building Committee (except Judge Ledbetter) took a train trip to several other states to evaluate historical society buildings. Kansas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, New York, Indiana, Tennessee and the District of Columbia were visited. Others on the trip, in addition to the committeemen, were Edward P. Boyd, Dean of Engineering at Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College; and Solomon Andrew Layton of the architectural firm of Layton, Hicks, and Forsyth. The classical limestone building in St. Paul, Minnesota, was chosen as the model for the Oklahoma Historical Society's new building.

The Wiley Post Historical Building is architecturally significant as an outstanding example of the work of Layton, Hicks, and Forsyth. The firm was very well known in Oklahoma City and across the state. They were responsible for the design of the State Capitol Building (1914-1917), many downtown Oklahoma City Buildings, and a number of public buildings across Oklahoma. Solidity, quality of construction, and meticulous concern for detail are evident in all of the firm's buildings. Each of the firm's distinctive designs are readily identified by the similar characteristic details. Rich in detail, both inside and out, the Wiley Post Historical Building is an outstanding example of their work.

In addition to the Wiley Post Historical Building and the State Capitol, Layton, Hicks, and Forsyth is responsible for the Braniff Building (National Register 1980), the India Temple Shrine Building (National Register 1980), the Oklahoma Publishing Company Building (National Register 1978), Central High School (National Register 1976), and the Skirvin Hotel (National Register 1979). Other noteworthy Oklahoma City buildings they designed include the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company Building, the Baum Building (demolished), the Patterson Building (demolished), the Petroleum Building, the Halliburton's Department Store Building (demolished), four other major school buildings, and the Oklahoma County Courthouse. Outside the city, buildings credited to the firm or its members include a number of buildings on the University of Oklahoma campus in Norman as well as fifteen county courthouses.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 3

The Wiley Post Historical Building is an outstanding example of the firm's use of the Neo-Classical style. It reintroduces a wide range of classical ornamental motifs including the vase or urn, mythical creatures, formal patterns, and molding enrichments taken from the Capitol, entablatures and bases of the various orders. Neo-Classicism in America fell into two periods, the Federal style and the Greek Revival. The building's dominating facade on Ionic columns which mark the entrance, identify it as belonging to the Greek classical motifs used for ornamentation on the building: anthemions, antefix, lion masks, wreaths, medallions, scrolling foliage, palmettes, waterleaves, and festoons.

In summary, the Wiley Post Historical Building has served as the Oklahoma Historical Society's headquarters for the past sixty years. During the building's period of significance it became the symbol of the Society providing the repository for those artifacts, manuscripts, books, and other materials necessary for the interpretation and presentation of Oklahoma history to the public. Education is the primary goal of the Society, and this fact was well established during the period 1929-1939. Not only is the Wiley Post Historical Building important to the educational history of the state, it is of architectural merit as well. It is an outstanding example of the work of one of the most renowned architectural firms to practice in Oklahoma during the first half of the twentieth century.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Allen, Edward Phillip. "Notes and Documents." Chronicles of Oklahoma, Volume 48, No. 4. 1970-71.

Doyle, Thomas H. "History of the Oklahoma Historical Society." Chronicles of Oklahoma, Volume 10: 162-169. 1932.

Standley, Fred Smith. "The Oklahoma Historical Society, 1983-1995." M.A. Thesis. University of Oklahoma, 1986.

Evans, Charles. "Oklahoma Historical Society. Its Needs and Expansions." Chronicles of Oklahoma, Volume 24: 399-415. 1946-47.

Vertical files of the Oklahoma Historical Society.

☒ See continuation sheet

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 # _____

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 3.4 acres

UTM References

A 14 635900 3928220
Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
Zone Easting Northing

D _____

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies an area roughly equivalent to two city blocks. The land on which the Wiley Post Historical Building is situated has not been platted and is within the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec 27 T 12N R3W. It is bounded on the west by Lincoln Blvd., the east by Lindsay, the north by N.E. 21st, and the south by N.E. 19th.

☒ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire property that has historically been associated with the Wiley Post Historical Building.

☒ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

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organization Meacham-Weisiger Associates date June 30, 1989

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city or town Norman state Oklahoma zip code 73069



Oklahoma Historical Society Building

