

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <u>Oklahoma</u>	
COUNTY: <u>LeFlore</u>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER <b>MAY 5 1972</b>	DATE

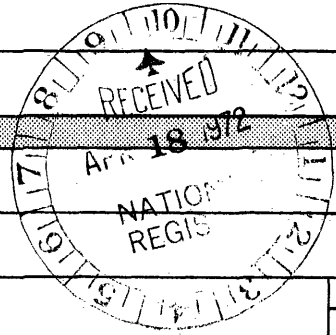
1. NAME

COMMON:  
Choctaw Agency/Walker Station  
AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Old Skullyville

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
c. 1 m. NE of  
CITY OR TOWN:  
Spiro  
STATE:  
Oklahoma

CODE: 40 COUNTY: LeFlore CODE: 079



3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Garrett Ainsworth  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
General Delivery  
CITY OR TOWN:  
Spiro STATE:  
Oklahoma CODE:  
40

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

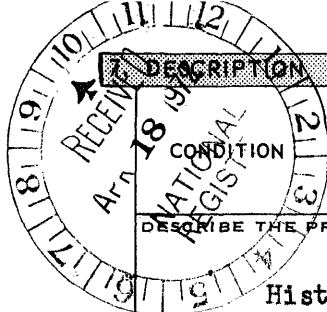
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
Office of the County Clerk  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
LeFlore County Courthouse  
CITY OR TOWN:  
Poteau STATE:  
Oklahoma CODE:  
40

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Oklahoma Historic Sites Survey  
DATE OF SURVEY: 1958     Federal     State     County     Local  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Oklahoma Historic Society  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
Historical Building  
CITY OR TOWN:  
Oklahoma City STATE:  
Oklahoma CODE:  
40

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DESCRIPTION

(Check One)

Excellent  Good  Fair  Deteriorated  Ruins  Unexposed

CONDITION

(Check One)

Altered  Unaltered

(Check One)

Moved  Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Historian W. B. Morrison has left this description of the Skullyville area as it was in 1832 when the first Choctaws began to arrive: "The situation was healthful, the land being gravelly and easily drained, while a group of never failing springs furnished an abundance of excellent water. These springs still survive the cutting of surrounding trees and the general cultivation of adjoining land, and until a very recent date the water was bottled and sold in Spiro and Fort Smith." He wrote in 1938. His then-and-now description is still valid. The big spring that served Choctaw Agency originally, and then the Butterfield Overland Stage station it became in 1858, still flows invitingly from a pipe beside the county road that serves the area.

The first agency building, around which Skullyville developed, was a three-room log affair on a high stone foundation. The hewn logs, said to be a foot in diameter, were cut on Cavanal Mountain some 15 miles away. Floors and doors were of puncheon style. Nails were handmade. Red cedar shingles covered the roof and they were not replaced until some three score years later when the building was remodeled by a new owner.

Major F. W. Armstrong, the Choctaws' first agent in the west, erected the building, lived in it until he died in 1835. Some years later, when the agency was abandoned, the log structure was taken over and made into a residence by Tandy C. Walker, a part-blood Choctaw who became the first chief of the Nation. When the Butterfield stages started coming through in 1858 his home became one of the stations.

Until the Civil War the surrounding town of Skullyville grew and maintained a position of importance in the Choctaw Nation. This pre-eminence, however, as noted in No. 8, faded rapidly after the war. Bypassing of the railroad hastened the decay. Meanwhile, the Tandy Walker home passed into other hands. In 1947, and long known by this time as the Ainsworth Place, it was perhaps the oldest house of its kind then standing in Oklahoma. And then on September 12 it, too, like so many of Old Skullyville's early structures, burned to the ground. Today only scattered foundation and chimney stones, and tangled landscaping, mark the spot.

But other evidences of Skullyville's past can be probed by those who are so inclined. About 150 feet east of the station site is the easily defined northeast/southwest cut that marks the course of the Butterfield stages. Near by is the pipe from which flows a steady stream of water from the Walker Station (Ainsworth) spring. In the yard of the now-abandoned, brick, Oak Lodge school is the official Oklahoma Historical Society marker telling the Skullyville story. A hundred yards or so to the west is the Skullyville cemetery. It contains hundreds, perhaps thousands of graves, many unmarked. Engraved stones date back into the 1830s. To read them is to call the role of important Choctaw families.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

## SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

1832 until after the Civil War

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political      | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric         | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering          | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi-             | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry             | osophy   | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture         | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention            | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                   | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture        | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape            | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                 | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                 | Architecture                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human-             | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature           | itarian  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications      | <input type="checkbox"/> Military             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                   | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation        | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Let Old Skullyville be remembered long as the principal town of the Choctaw Nation before the coming of the railroads, for here were some of the flower of the tribe; a set of people who always stood for honesty, education and the general welfare, whose men were always noted for their hospitality and generosity, the women for their charity and purity of character.

Thus did a former resident recall some years back how it was before the Civil War when this one-time Choctaw Nation district capital -- now reduced largely to a cemetery, abandoned school, some scattered homes, and memories -- was one of the most important settlements in Indian Territory. Granted, oldtimers tend often to romanticize. And certainly Skullyville suffered through its share of human frailties, including a fatal feud between two of its leading families. But the importance of the town is not diminished thereby and its role in the development of the Choctaw Nation, and Oklahoma, deserves both recognition and memorialization.

Skullyville was, literally, "Moneytown" (from the Choctaw word "iskuli" for a piece of money) - the agency town from which the Indians received annuity payments from the federal government. Founded in 1832, when removal of the Choctaws from Mississippi got under way, it became capital of the Mushulatubbe district, one of three into which the new Choctaw Nation was divided. It was located some 15 miles southwest of Fort Smith and about five miles south of Fort Coffee, the military post on the Arkansas River, where the re-located Indians disembarked.

Major F. W. Armstrong was the first Choctaw agent in the West. He founded Skullyville and ordered erection there of the log agency building. The settlement was soon a bustling one. Slave-owning Indians settled in the fertile river bottoms of the area. Licensed traders established stores at Skullyville and the town was trade center, not only for many Choctaws, but for other Indians to the north and west as well. Its presence on the trails out of Fort Smith to the west and south added to Skullyville's importance.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Foreman, Grant, "The California Overland Mail Route Through Oklahoma," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. IX (1931), pp. 300-317  
 Morrison, W. B., "The Saga of Skullyville," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XVI (1938), pp. 234-240  
 Wright, Muriel H., "The Butterfield Overland Mail One Hundred Years Ago," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. XXXV (1957), pp. 55-71

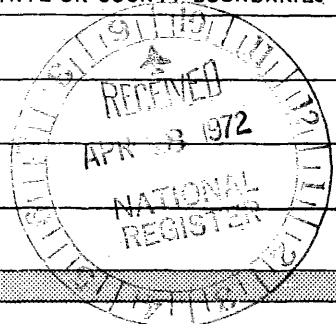
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		35° 15' 03"	94° 35' 29"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **Less than 10 acres**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: **Kent Ruth, Deputy**

ORGANIZATION: **Oklahoma Historical Society** DATE: **June 1971**

STREET AND NUMBER: **Historical Building**

CITY OR TOWN: **Oklahoma City** STATE: **Oklahoma** CODE: **40**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: Gess D Shur

Title: SLO for Oklahoma

Date: MAR 15 1972

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

Robert M. Utley  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 5/5/72

ATTEST: William J. ...  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: 5/2/72

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1972

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No. 8 Significance - 2

Choctaw Agency/Walker Station

In 1834 the artist George Catlin visited the town, left a valuable description of ballgames played at Charby Prairie, one of the famed Choctaw ball grounds. In 1838 the Chickasaw Indians were removed from the southeastern states and many of them were brought to Fort Coffee, moved westward through Skullyville. A few years later many Seminoles made the same trek through the town. In 1845 New Hope Seminary for Choctaw girls opened in frame buildings a mile east of Skullyville. It was a companion school to Fort Coffee Academy, for boys, both of which were operated by the Methodist church. New Hope operated until destroyed by fire in 1896.

Skullyville was thus an educational, economic, and social center for this northeastern corner of the Choctaw Nation, as well as a political center. When the national capital was moved westward in 1850 from Tuskahoma to Doakville, Choctaws in this section were unhappy and there was separatist talk for a time. The Skullyville Constitution resulted from an 1857 convention in the town, its purpose to unify the Nation under one governor or chief. Under this constitution Tandy C. Walker, a part-blood Choctaw, became the first chief. Although his jurisdiction was not recognized throughout the Nation, he remained an important tribal figure until he died in 1877.

When the Choctaw agency was abandoned, he took over the log building, enlarged it into his home and governor's mansion. When the Butterfield Overland Mail route was established, Skullyville became the first station and the old agency/residence took on yet another role. Governor Walker was active in the Civil War, organizing the first Choctaw-Chickasaw regiment for Confederate service. His stone is one of the more impressive in the beautiful old Skullyville cemetery. On it, beneath the Masonic emblem and name -- Gov. Tandy Walker Born Oct. 14, 1814 Died Feb. 21, 1877 -- appear the familiar lines:

Behold and see as you pass by,  
As you are now, so once was I,  
As I am now you too will be,  
Prepare for death and follow me.

Another chief of the Choctaw Nation is buried near by: Edmund McCurtain. Other well known Choctaw families represented by stones include the Felsems, McLeans, Belvins, Laniers, Ainsworths, LeFlores, Wards, Perrys, and McKenneys. Little of substance is left of Skullyville besides the cemetery. The town declined sharply after the Civil War. Stores and residences burned, were not rebuilt. The railroad, when it came, bypassed Skullyville to bring nearby Spire into being and

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No. 8 Significance - 3

Choctaw Agency/Walker Station

importance. When fire finally destroyed the old Tandy Walker home in 1947, Skullyville's strongest physical tie with the past was broken. Today the Walker Station spring (now known as Ainsworth spring) still flows - from a pipe beside the country road, one of the most obvious signs of life in the now almost completely abandoned Choctaw town.

