

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

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

1. Name

historic First Soil Conservation District Dedication Site

and/or common Claude Bess Farm

2. Location

street & number 2 miles west and 1 1/2 miles north of Eufaula; North of airport
na not for publication

city, town Eufaula me. vicinity of congressional district 002

state Oklahoma code 40 county McIntosh code 091

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Claude Bess, Jr.

street & number W. of City

city, town Eufaula vicinity of state Oklahoma

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Clerk's Office

street & number McIntosh County Courthouse

city, town Eufaula state Oklahoma

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Oklahoma Comprehensive Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records Oklahoma Historical Society, Preservation Office

city, town Oklahoma City state Oklahoma

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

A comparison of the two aerial photographs (one in 1938 before the project began and one in 1967) provide evidence of the changes in soil conservation practices. Within the 40 acre section of the original 160 acre farm (outlined in the photographs), considerable erosion had occurred by 1938 (gullies visible on western half of site) but with use of conservation practices the area has been converted to pastureland. This section of land which rises less than ten feet within the 40 acres, consists of two soil types (Carrytown silt loam and Karma loamy fine sand), which should have never been cultivated. Visible on the southern half of the nominated site, the contour terraces (which curve from west to north) have been sodded with bermuda grass plantings. Cupped within the terraces on the northeastern edge is a tree (post) lot which is still intact. Designed to provide erosion control, livestock protection, and fence posts, the post lot was planted with catalpa, black locust, and osage oranges in rows running east southeast. This large stand of trees (approximately 1.5 acres) has recently provided cover for volunteer growth of winged elms and persimmons. On the north side of the post lot is a pond, constructed as a later conservation measure to supply water for the livestock. As the aerial photographs show, the gullies caused by severe erosion and improper land use have been eliminated by the use of conservation practices (terraces, sodding, post lot, and pond), which have helped conserve the soil and water while increasing the land's agricultural usefulness.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1938

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The nominated site is the dedication grounds and demonstration site for the first soil conservation district in the United States, the McIntosh County Soil Conservation District. The 40 acre dedication site, selected as a tangible representative of the district (which includes the southern half of McIntosh County), marked the beginning of the history of extensive soil conservation on privately owned farms in the United States.

During the 1930s, much of Oklahoma, like much of central United States, experienced the worst drought on record accompanied by a series of dust storms which drove home the consequences of the misuse of farmland. McIntosh County reflected problems common in the Dust Bowl: over-extension of agriculture onto land unable to support cultivation (In McIntosh County during the worst year, 1929, over 117,000 acres were in cultivation as compared to 61,000 of the same land in 1980.), massive erosion, loss of topsoil (the county had lost an average of 6" of topsoil), and the resulting loss of productivity. Only through the combined efforts of federal programs (Works Progress Administration, Soil Conservation Service), state laws (creating the Soil Conservation Districts), and private landowners in the soil conservation districts could this trend be reversed to return private farmland to productivity. As a side benefit, these early efforts provided jobs in an area desperate for relief not only from the drought but from the depression as well.

The McIntosh County Soil Conservation District represented the first concentrated effort in the United States which sought to conserve soil and water, regaining productivity and use of some of the most acutely eroded land in the state. As the first district to be organized, it provided a model for other projects across the state and the nation. Even though the site is less than fifty years old, it represents early conservation efforts in the United States (early for the history of soil conservation), and was the forerunner for other districts across the nation, which have significantly affected the status of agriculture in the United States.

The dedication took place on December 2, 1939 with nationally known dignitaries and state officials in attendance. The ceremonies were aired over national radio and filmed by newsreel cameras with 4000 people in attendance. The highlight of the ceremonies took place at the nominated site (at the time a private farm operated by J. H. Rumsey and owned by W. Butenschoen, one of the first directors of the district), where many of the conservation techniques were demonstrated by W.P.A workers: pasture sodding, gully control, terracing, tree planting, fertilizing, and road protection.

Today, many of the efforts are still visible, especially the bermuda grass sod plantings, the tree lot, and the terracing. Since the owners of the farm have had a continued interest in soil conservation (The current owner has also served on the district's board of directors.), more recent efforts at conservation are evident in

9. Major Bibliographical References

Drake, Laurence, et. a. History of Conservation in Oklahoma, Oklahoma City, (197?), al.
 Knobel, E. W. and Brensing, O. H. Soil Survey of McIntosh County, Oklahoma, U.S.D.A. Series
 1933, No. 11. Washington, D. C.
 "Nation's No. 1 W.P.A. Soil Project Will Be Dedicated Here Saturday" Indian Journal (Eufaula,
 Oklahoma.), November 30, 1939, p. 1.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 40 acres

Quadrangle name Eufaula, Oklahoma

Quadrangle scale 7.5

UMT References

A

1	5
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2	6	2	2	9	0
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3	9	1	0	3	1	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

B

1	5
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2	6	2	2	8	0
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3	9	0	9	9	3	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

C

1	5
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2	6	1	9	0	0
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3	9	0	9	9	4	0
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D

1	5
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2	6	1	9	1	0
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3	9	1	0	3	2	0
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E

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Verbal boundary description and justification South 1/2 of NW 1/4 of SE 1/4 and North 1/2 of SW 1/4 of SE 1/4 of Sec. 28 T10NR16E; From a point 1 mile west of U.S. highway 69 on State highway 9, go north 1 mile and west 1/4 mile on dirt section line road; then go north 1/8 mile to the point of beginning. From point of beginning, go west 1/4 mile, north 1/4 mile, east 1/4 mile

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

state NA code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Karen Curths

organization Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey date August, 1980

street & number Oklahoma State University telephone (405) 624-5678

city or town Stillwater state Oklahoma

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature C. Metcalf date 5-26-82

title date

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>Beth Crowne</u>	date <u>9/29/82</u>
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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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Significance

a pond and the original efforts have been preserved, also reflecting the continued development in soil conservation practices. The contrast in the aerial photographs of the land in 1938 (before the demonstration) and in 1967, shows the erosion gullies and crop planting techniques which have been altered to remove the gullies, terrace the land, add a post lot and a pond, and put it into less intensive and more suitable use as pastureland.

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Major Bibliographical References

Interviews:

Claude Bess (current owner), Eufaula, July 1, 1980.

Mr. & Mrs. J. H. Rumsey, Eufaula (farmers of nomination site at time of ceremonies),
July 1, 1980.

Sam Viles (District Conservationist, Soil Conservation Service, Eufaula), July-
August, 1980.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Verbal boundary description and justification

and south 1/4 mile to point of beginning.