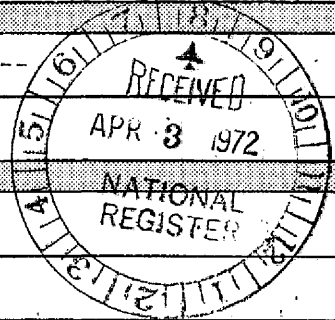


NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: **Oklahoma**
 COUNTY: **McCurtain**
 FOR NPS USE ONLY
 ENTRY NUMBER: **NOV 9 1972** DATE: **NOV 9 1972**



1. NAME

COMMON: **Wheelock Church**
 AND/OR HISTORIC: **Wheelock Mission Church**

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: **c. 2 m. NE of**
 CITY OR TOWN: **Millerton (SW/4 NE/4 Sec. 34, T 6 S. R 22 E)**
 STATE: **Oklahoma** CODE: **40** COUNTY: **McCurtain** .CODE: **089**

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input 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	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input 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 type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" 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: **Wheelock Church and Cemetery Ass'n of Oklahoma**
 STREET AND NUMBER: **c/o McCurtain County Treasurer**
 CITY OR TOWN: **Idabel** STATE: **Oklahoma** CODE: **40**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: **Office of the County Clerk**
 STREET AND NUMBER: **McCurtain County Courthouse**
 CITY OR TOWN: **Idabel** 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 Historical Society**
 STREET AND NUMBER: **Historical Building**
 CITY OR TOWN: **Oklahoma City** STATE: **Oklahoma** CODE: **40**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: **Oklahoma**
 COUNTY: **McCurtain**
 ENTRY NUMBER: **NOV 9 1972**
 DATE: **NOV 9 1972**
 FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In the 160 years since its founding in 1832, the Wheelock congregation has worshipped for the most part in three different physical settings. Its first service -- and the first Presbyterian service in what is now Oklahoma -- was held under a towering oak near the newly established Wheelock Mission. A few benches had been made by splitting logs and boring holes in them for legs. The pulpit was a surplus wooden box. Indians wandering in from the surrounded woods to join in the singing of hymns they had learned in Mississippi. Rev. Alfred Wright gave the sermon.

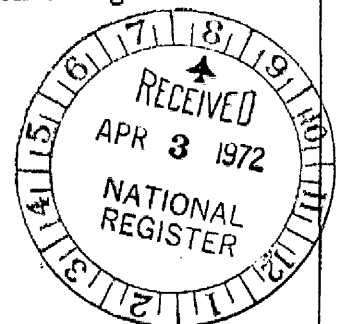
Later that fall the first of a dozen log buildings that would serve the mission was completed. The congregation moved inside and it was in this crude building, on the second Sunday in December, that the congregation was officially organized. For more than ten years it served as a combination church and school house.

In 1845, with mission and academy in more adequate buildings, the desire for a more suitable place of worship led the congregation to decide on a church of stone. People of the community contributed both money and labor. Additional financial support came from established Presbyterian churches in the north and east.

Wheelock Church, looking much as it does today, was finished in 1846. Stones that went into its 20-inch-thick walls were taken from the ground near the church and chiseled into shape by hand. Windows were deeply recessed. The pulpit was hand-carved. Pews had solid, one-piece board backs some 20 inches wide. A vaulted ceiling arched over the main floor and balcony. Dimensions of the still solid structure are approximately 40 x 50 feet. The traditional wooden steeple over the plain front entrance on the west, is some 35 feet high. Towering oaks still shade the grassy churchyard, as they do the fenced-in cemetery across the country road a few yards to the southeast.

The church has had its ups and downs, however. In 1866 a fire virtually destroyed the mission on the east. Wheelock Church itself stood roofless until 1884 and services returned to makeshift quarters as the Academy struggled back to its feet. Restoration work on the mission facility began in 1882 under leadership of Rev. John Edwards. By 1884 all of the buildings had been restored, including the church itself. It has been in service ever since, occasionally only for weddings, funerals and other special occasions, but since 1946 once again on a regular Sunday schedule.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



SIGNIFICANCE

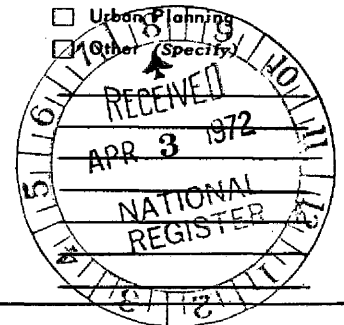
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1846 to the present

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Wheelock Church, as a congregation, dates back to 1832, when it was organized by Rev. Alfred Wright as the core of his mission effort among the Choctaw Indians, then being removed from Mississippi. As a stone, steepled place of worship, Wheelock Church dates from 1846, making it the oldest church building standing in Oklahoma today. Its nearly century and a half of service -- first to the Choctaw Nation, then to the State of Oklahoma -- would thus seem to eminently qualify it for inclusion in the National Register, a status already accorded Wheelock Academy, the educational arm of the Wright missionary effort.

Rev. Wright, a native of Connecticut and a graduate of Andover Seminary in 1814, started his work among the Choctaws in Mississippi in 1820. He followed "The Trail of Tears" with them to Indian Territory in 1832 and worked among and for them until his death March 31, 1853. His grave is one of many in the pleasantly tree-shaded Wheelock burying ground.

The Wrights arrived in this far southeastern corner of Indian Territory, with some 600 Choctaws, in September 1832. The first Presbyterian service was held shortly thereafter ... under a towering oak with some split-log benches and an ordinary wooden box serving as pulpit. The service opened with Indians singing the old hymns they had learned in Mississippi. Rev. Wright, of course, preached the sermon.

That fall a dozen log buildings were erected. And on the second Sunday of December 1832, in the first completed building, the first Presbyterian church in the territory was established. Joining were thirty members of the Mississippi Congregation, plus seven new ones. Wheelock Church had been born.

Wheelock Academy developed rapidly, meanwhile, from a day school in 1833, to a regular seminary, for girls, founded (in 1842) by the Choctaw Council. Mrs. Wright became the school's first principal. By 1844 its crude log cabins had given way to newer and better buildings and it was time, the congregation concluded, that Wheelock Church itself had a more fitting home. By 1846 the sturdy stone church -- essentially as one sees it today -- was completed.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Evans, Jean, "History of Wheelock Academy is Traced," McCurtain Daily Gazette, Idabel, Okla., Dec. 31, 1970 & Jan. 1, 1971
 Ruth, Kent, et al., Oklahoma: A Guide to the Sooner State, University of Oklahoma Press, 1957, pp. 373-374

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	° ' "	° ' "		33° 59' 26"	94° 59' 25"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

TL
No UTR

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **five acres**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

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

ORGANIZATION: **Oklahoma Historical Society** DATE: **February 1972**

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: [Signature]

Title: SLD for Oklahoma

Date: MAR 2 1972

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

[Signature]
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 11/9/72

ATTEST:

[Signature]
 (Keeper of The National Register)

Date: Nov. 9, 1972

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Oklahoma	
COUNTY	
McCurtain	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	NOV 9 1972

(Number all entries)

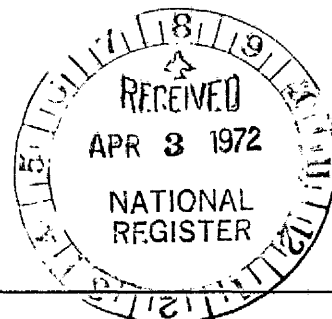
No. 8. Significance

Wheelock Church

The Civil War disrupted normal life throughout Indian Territory, however. And created wide-spread destruction. On top of this a fire, in 1866, swept Wheelock Mission, leaving little but the Wright home, the small log school house, and the 20-inch-thick stone walls of Wheelock Church. For a decade and a half the mission/academy area was virtually abandoned. But in 1882 restoration work began under leadership of Rev. John Edwards, descendent of the famed Dr. Johnathan Edwards. In 1883 the Choctaw Council voted funds for the erection of new buildings. And in 1884 the well-known Robe family of missionaries and teachers was assigned to Wheelock. From then until the present academy and church have followed somewhat divergent paths. (Wheelock Academy, at the time of writing, stands abandoned, its future status in doubt.)

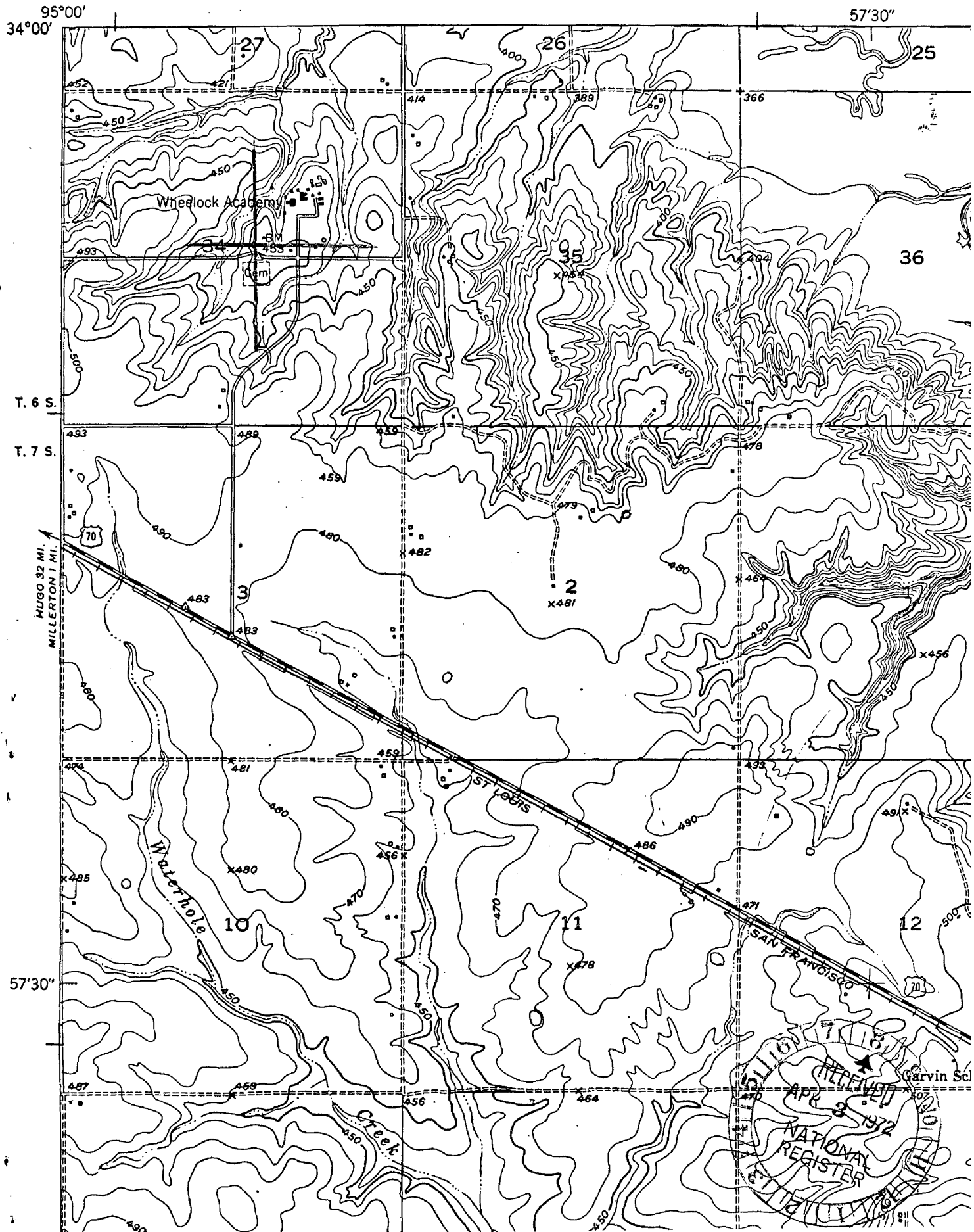
Wheelock Church was used regularly for religious service from its restoration until 1900. From then until 1946 it served primarily for weddings and funerals. In that latter year interest in the old stone church among Presbyterian congregations in southeastern Oklahoma led to an official reorganization of Wheelock Church. Regular religious services have been held there ever since. The church itself, and the cemetery, were recently purchased by the Presbyterian Church, U. S. (South) for preservation as a significant tribute to the Presbyterian missionary effort among the Indians and as a fitting personal memorial to a beloved and respected man of God.

As missionary, physician, and translator of the Bible into the Choctaw language, Rev. Wright served the Choctaws long and well. The years from 1820 to 1853 add up to a third of a century. As to how well he served, there is the case of Kiliahote, a young, full-blood Choctaw boy, one of some 600 members of Wright's Wheelock Church over the years. So much did Kiliahote admire Rev. Wright he discarded his Choctaw name and assumed the name Allen Wright. He subsequently became Principal Chief of the Choctaw Nation. By virtue of having suggested "Oklahoma" as the name for the proposed Indian Territory, this in 1866, he also became the so-called "father" of Oklahoma.



ALUFORM
125000

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



95°00'
34°00'

57'30"

T. 6 S.

T. 7 S.

HUGO 32 MI.
MILLERTON 1 MI.

57'30"

Whelock Academy

34
(Elev)

26

25

36

2

10

11

12

ST LOUIS

SAN FRANCISCO

Garvin Sc

RECEIVED
APR 3 1912
NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

STATE Oklahoma	
COUNTY McCurtain	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER NOV 9 1972	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: **Wheelock Church**
AND/OR HISTORIC: **Wheelock Mission Church**

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
c. 2 m. NE of
CITY OR TOWN:
Millerton (SW/4 NE/4 Sec. 34, T 6 S. R 22 E)

STATE: Oklahoma	CODE 40	COUNTY: McCurtain	CODE 089
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3. MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE:
U.S.G.S. - Garvin Quadrangle
SCALE: **7.5 minute series 1:24,000**
DATE: **1950**

4. REQUIREMENTS

- TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS
1. Property boundaries where required.
 2. North arrow.
 3. Latitude and longitude reference.

Lat.: **33° 59' 26"**
Long.: **94° 59' 25"**

15/316200/3762670

