

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUL 30 1976
DATE ENTERED	JAN 20 1978

**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  
Meers Mining Camp  
AND/OR COMMON  
Meers

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
c. 20 m. NW of  
CITY, TOWN  
Lawton VICINITY OF  
STATE CODE COUNTY CODE  
Oklahoma 40 Comanche 031

**CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input 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:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
Alton L. Foster Jr.  
STREET & NUMBER  
Meers - via - Lawton  
CITY, TOWN STATE  
Lawton VICINITY OF Oklahoma

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Office of the County Clerk  
STREET & NUMBER  
Comanche County Courthouse  
CITY, TOWN STATE  
Lawton Oklahoma

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
Oklahoma Historic Sites Survey  
DATE  
1958 FEDERAL  STATE COUNTY LOCAL  
DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS  
Oklahoma Historical Society  
CITY, TOWN STATE  
Oklahoma City Oklahoma

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> XALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> XMOVED DATE <u>1902</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

---

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Isolated relics of man's search for gold can be found throughout the Wichita Mountains. The remains of one impressive smelter, a score or so miles west of Meers, will be nominated at a later date. Pits believed to be the last evidence of old Spanish arrastres (primitive ore-grinding devices powered by a donkey or burro) have been found in several places. One is just south of present Meers, near the original site of the camp (see no. 8) and undoubtedly contributing to its location there. Similarly, long abandoned mine shafts dot this rugged, heavily wooded area, along with shallow prospector holes, stacked-stone cairns marking miner's claims, and crumbling foundations of now vanished buildings.

Only a few of these scattered relics still mark the original 1901 site of Meers, inside the boundary of the Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge. All that remains, of substance, of the 1902 site to which the camp removed on orders of Uncle Sam, is the picturesquely crumbling frame building of the enclosed pictures. The false fronted south section (on the left) probably dates from the 1902-1903 boom days. It was then a drugstore. With somewhat more recent additions on the north Meers Store today offers, with a minimum of grocery staples, a branch post office (out of Lawton; the community recently lost its own office), a gas station, and a small cafe that has become widely known in the area for the quality of its hamburgers. It also serves as an informal community center for area farmers and ranchers.

In appearance, as well as in make-up of goods and services offered, Meers -- i.e., Meers Store -- might well represent today countless similar "country stores" that dotted the farm belt at the turn of the century. Mechanization of farm machinery and resulting consolidation of land holdings, improved transportation facilities, increasingly sophisticated merchandising techniques, and many other economic and social factors have combined to push ~~many~~ the vast majority of these early-day "general merchandise emporiums" into oblivion. The few that remain tend to do so on the strength of nostalgia. Some became virtual museum pieces, in effect if not actually in fact. Meers Store not only remains, but prospers, in its own way. In its artifacts pertaining to gold rush glory days the visitor will recognize elements of the museum. But if he checks the line-up of area pickups parked in front, the mail window inside, and the handful of cafe tables with their complement of coffee drinkers in boots and broad-brimmed hats, he'll also recognize that timeless element of community gathering place that characterizes small town life today everywhere. Boasting only a single frame building, Meers is indeed a small town. But it clings fiercely to life. That it serves simultaneously to memorialize Oklahoma's biggest gold rush gives it added interest ... and, it is felt, increased significance.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE
___1500-1599	___AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	___LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE
___1600-1699	___ARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	___MILITARY	___SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
___1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER
___1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	___EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	___TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	___COMMUNICATIONS	___INDUSTRY	___POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)
		___INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1901 to Present

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

"The grass is always greener . . ." There's more than a little of that philosophy behind the frenzied establishment of Meers Mining Camp. The area that experienced one of Oklahoma's best known gold rushes was "off limits" to whites until August 6, 1901, when the sprawling Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Indian lands were opened to settlement. But gold fever had been building up steadily over the years. From the time the Spanish first drifted into this section of southwestern Oklahoma in the early 1600s there had been rumors of "lost" gold mines and buried caches. In early 1892 silver was discovered in what was then Greer County, Texas, just west of the Indian lands. A mining town of Silverton sprang up near present Mangum. In the summer of 1895 there was a gold rush to the north, near Cloud Chief. A camp called Golden was established, this on the former Cheyenne-Arapaho reservation. And mining fever skyrocketed. But a key area was taboo to the prospectors: the Wichita Mountains. Then in 1901 this last big section of Indian land was opened by lottery and prospectors swarmed over the area, concentrating on the northern and western slopes of the Wichitas.

More than 5,000 miners and prospectors came from all over the United States. Mining towns sprang up overnight ... Wildman, Oreana, Doris, Golden Pass, Canyon City, Meers, and others. Territorial mining newspapers sprang up with them ... the Mt. Sheridan Miner, the Otter Creek Miner, the Mineral Kingdom. And headlines like "The Wichita Mountains The Future Mineral District of America" ... "Gold Assays \$360 Per Ton At Wildman" ... "\$2,000 A Ton Strike at Mt. Park." The boom was pretty much self-fueling.

Digging started at the Gold Blossom mine near Meers in 1901. Evidence of a long-abandoned Spanish arrastre undoubtedly stimulated interest in this particular area. The camp was named for Col. A. J. Meers, a Texas miner who had been in and around the mountains since 1886. Unfortunately, however, its original location was in a grove of cedars at the foot of Mount Sheridan, a couple of miles south of the site being nominated. And this was inside the boundary of the forest and wildlife preserve the government was establishing (the present Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Preserve).

The order to move was given and in 1902 miners and businessmen transferred their tents and shacks to the present location of Meers. The boom continued and by 1903 the camp, with a population of perhaps 3,000, boasted the regulation assortment of hotels, cafes, stores, blacksmith shops, saloons, and churches. On October 24, 1903, the Mt. Sheridan Miner in its first edition (a photostatic copy of which is among the artifacts displayed in Meers Store today) was "documenting" the validity of the gold rush. Some \$50,000 worth of mining equipment had just been unloaded at Cache, the nearest railroad point, one story reported. "Charley Powell is sinking a shaft that is destined to prove very rich in gold," according to another. "That there are gold

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Ruth, Kent, et al., Oklahoma: A Guide to the Sooner State, University of Oklahoma Press, 1957  
 Thetford, Francis, "Dateline: Oklahoma," The Daily Oklahoman, March 3, 1968  
 Wilson, Steve, Oklahoma Treasures and Treasure Tales, University of Oklahoma Press, 1976

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY c. one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	14	538500	3848815	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Kent Ruth, Deputy

ORGANIZATION

Oklahoma Historical Society

DATE

January 1976

STREET & NUMBER

Historical Building

TELEPHONE

405/884-5456

CITY OR TOWN

Oklahoma City

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*[Signature]*

TITLE

*[Signature]*

DATE

JUL 27 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*[Signature]*  
*[Signature]*

DATE

1-20-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

1-16-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
JUL 30 1976
RECEIVED
JAN 20 1970
DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 1

Meers Mining Camp

in silver in the mountains can no longer be doubted," claimed a third. The boom in Meers, as elsewhere, was self-fueling.

First announcement of the discovery of gold in the Wichitas, hailed as "the coming El Dorado of the world," came from a Dr. Hardin, identified as president of the Shawnee Milling Co., which reported finding gold and silver ore in one 72-foot shaft assayed at \$175 a ton. "Few believed the (Hardin) story," said The Miner, "but, as the saying goes, truth will prevail." Listing "some rich strikes in the past few days," the old paper named such mines as the Winner and the Copper Queen, owned by J. C. Hollis; a discovery of platinum ore at the head of Cache Creek, and "valuable mines" like the Teddy, Little Bar, Mountain Gold, and Big Four.

But by 1907 it was over. All hopes for an El Dorado in the Wichitas had been dashed. Miners and prospectors were moving on to still greener fields ... or settling on the newly opened Indian lands around them and becoming farmers and ranchers. Meers itself was shrinking almost as fast as it had grown. And today only a one-time drugstore remains, a ramshackle, added-onto, false-fronted frame building that houses a combination country store/cafe/gas station/branch post office/community center. Broken concrete and wooden steps, only partially guarded by a bent pipe railing, lead up to the sagging front door. An all-glass telephone booth and a modern Coca-Cola box stand incongruously in front on a planked apron. Also in front -- in a wry gesture of defiance? -- is a parking meter. It strikes the reflective observer, provided his make-up is not totally lacking in whimsy, as altogether fitting.

\* \* \*

Meers is a memorial -- small and admittedly modest, but boasting a certain picturesque charm -- to the Wichita Mountains "gold rush" of the early 1900s and the mystique of vast underground riches hanging over the entire region since the first Spaniards came this way from Mexico three centuries before.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Oklahoma	
COUNTY Comanche	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	20 1978

(Number all entries)

Meers Mining Camp

Comments in response to 11-12-76 questions raised by the NR staff.

No. 7. We are nominating essentially the ramshackle old building that is virtually alone the Meers Mining Camp today. Perhaps "c. one acre" should be changed to "less than one acre," which would be more than enough to include the store. The camp itself surrounded the store, but there would appear to be no valid reason for including it in the nomination, as its structures have long since disappeared.

In response to "the 1901 construction date" it should be pointed out that it applies to the original site of Meers, inside the present wildlife refuge boundary (cf. paragraph 2 of the nomination). Present meers was settled in 1902 after the government ordered the camp removed. At least part of the drug store building thus dates almost surely from 1902-1903. No documentation exists as to precise dates for the additions, but they were undoubtedly made shortly thereafter as the camp's "boom" ended within a few years.

No. 8. Why did "the drug store survive and everything else disappear?" Why does any business prosper or fail? To put it in today's jargon, it was apparently able to cope. Like many other small-town businesses over the country it changed with the times, dropping a function here, adding a line there. It is, of course, no longer a "drug store," but an all-purpose general merchandise store. Over the years it dabbled in groceries and sundries, added a lunch counter, put in a gasoline pump, served as post office, and so on. Primarily it served as a community center - a social center, if you will - for a sprawling, relatively isolated farming and ranching area. This, as pointed out in the nomination form, is justification enough - or so it seems to us - for the "commerce" claim as an area of significance.

