

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

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 Checotah MKT Depot  
other names/site number The Katy Depot Tourist Information Center

### 2. Location

street & number Paul Carr Drive N/A not for publication  
city, town Checotah N/A vicinity  
state Oklahoma code OK county McIntosh code 091 zip code 74426

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>5</u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>5</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

### 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] 8/1/91  
Signature of certifying official Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO  
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. 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] 9/5/91  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION--rail-related

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE--museum

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

STICK/EASTLAKE

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETEwalls WOOD--weatherboardroof CERAMIC TILEother N/A

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**Summary

The Checotah MKT Depot is a 24'x104', one-story, detached, balloon-frame building with wood siding and red tile roof. In its original setting it was aligned parallel to a railroad track. Its floor plan, laid out in 1903-1904, encompasses two waiting rooms, a ticket office, and a freight room. Exterior detailing and wall cladding are a vernacular form of Stick style. The depot illustrates the design, detailing, and construction technique typical of Territorial-Era (1861-1907) railroad depot architecture in Oklahoma. Design, materials, and workmanship have retained a high degree of integrity because the building has been subjected to very few alterations. The MKT Depot in Checotah escaped demolition by being moved to a new location; placed in a similar environment, it now lies adjacent to major transportation arteries in Checotah. It now sits with its long axis parallel to U.S. 69 access road/Paul Carr Drive. The Checotah MKT Depot still strongly evokes the feeling of its past function.,

Description of Historical Appearance

The original c. 1890 Checotah depot building was a one-story, wood frame, board-and-batten, shingle-roof structure measuring 20'x40'. Though there are no existing photos, an 1898 blueprint and a 1901 Sanborn map indicate that it may have had one 12' waiting room, an 8' ticket office, and a 20' freight/baggage room. It was enlarged in 1898 by the addition of 50' to the freight room. Decorative elements included eave brackets reminiscent of Stick style. As these brackets closely resemble the brackets on the present building, they may have been carried over from the 1890 building to the present building when completed in 1904.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1903-1904 period the depot was substantially enlarged to 24'x133' and given the general floor plan still to be seen today.<sup>2</sup> It may be that the materials from the old were used to construct the new. Early maps and floor plans indicate that the new depot encompassed two "white waiting rooms" (an outer 18' one for women and an inner 18' one for men), a 13' ticket office, an 18' baggage room, and a 63' freight room. In 1907 a Jim Crow law mandated segregated facilities in public transportation in Oklahoma. In 1907-1908 the baggage room was remodeled into a "colored waiting room": Two freight doors were blocked up, and<sub>3</sub> passenger doors were installed. Restrooms were installed in all waiting rooms. This configuration remained for the next two decades.

In the 1931-1937 period McIntosh County obtained from the railroad a right-of-way easement to allow the state to widen U.S. 266 through Checotah. Because of the road work,<sup>4</sup> the railroad removed the outer (southernmost--women's) 18' "White waiting room."<sup>4</sup> A trio of double-hung multi-light windows was installed in the new exterior

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wall, and two connecting doors were blocked up. At some time between 1929 and 1948, a 10' section was removed from the freight room, and a freight door in the end was closed off. The freight door was reinstalled in the (present) west facade of the freight room.<sup>5</sup> In the 1960s an automobile crashed through the end wall (present north wall) of the passenger section and demolished the windows, which were boarded up until the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society repaired them in 1987.<sup>6</sup> None of the alterations made since 1929 significantly affects the original Stick Style design nor the building's visual association with its function as a depot.

Description of Present Appearance

The Checotah MKT Depot's long, rectangular shape visually conveys its historic function; it is a traditional Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railway Company combination station, with roughly one-half devoted to processing passengers and one-half devoted to handling baggage and transferring freight. The strong horizontal massing also correlates to these functions. Exterior finishes and detailing identify its architectural style as a form of vernacular Stick favored by the MKT Railway (later, Railroad) Company in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

The depot features a side-gabled roof with flared eaves and a wide overhang ranging from 5'6" to 6'. The roofing material is red ceramic pantiles, most of which remain intact; composition roofing covers the southeast corner. The long, unbroken roof line has no flues, chimneys, gables, or eyebrows. On the east and west sides, the facade is divided into six bays (reading from left to right): on the west (front) there is a door and two windows, followed by a square projecting bay with five windows, a door and two windows, and a long wall pierced by three freight doors. On the east there are two freight doors, followed by two small windows, a door, a three-window, square projecting bay, and two separated windows.

The depot's exterior cladding and trim exemplify a vernacular Stick style often used by the MKT for detailing and individualizing its 1900-era combination stations. Here, wall cladding emphasizes the horizontal aspect. Below a plank water table the cladding consists of three feet of 3" beveled siding (on the south side, two feet of the beveled siding has been removed due to severe deterioration). Above the water table the cladding is simple 6" drop siding. Door and window surrounds in the passenger section are 1"x6" milled lumber; this provides strong vertical lines and breaks up the horizontal effect. Vertical corner boards on the projecting bays and at the wall joints have a similar design function, as do irregularly spaced single and paired eave brackets. Under the north and south ends, four eave brackets support the rafter assembly which overshoots the roof-wall junction. In the north gable is a decorative truss, or scissor-bracing. The eaves are boxed, with the soffit consisting of tongue-and-groove paneling. Contrasting paint emphasizes the vertical trimwork presently, as it did in the past. This particular combination of horizontal siding contrasted with vertical decorative millwork is seen in few existing "Katy" depots in Oklahoma, the others having a more traditional board-and-batten cladding above the water table.<sup>7</sup> On the east side and on the west side, along the freight section, are freight platforms, or docks, elevated 3'6" above the ground, on wood posts. The docks measure 5'x43' and 8'x54', respectively.

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The interior room arrangement of the Checotah MKT Depot is typical of Katy floor plans in the Territorial Era at the turn of the century. The depot is organized into two sections of approximately equal size. The three-room north section was devoted to passenger processing and station operations. The northernmost room, the "white waiting room" (formerly, the white men's waiting room), measures 17'10" by 22'8" and includes two restrooms along the east wall. From this waiting room a central interior panel door leads into the ticket/operator's office, and between the rooms there is one double-hung ticket window. The operator's office measures 12'8" by 27'4" and encompasses two square projecting bays in which the operator conducted observation activities. A panel door leads from the operator's office into the "colored waiting room" (originally, the baggage room), and beside the door is a pair of double-hung windows through which the agent and clerk conducted segregated passenger ticket business and freight business. Along the east wall and in the southeast corner are two restrooms. From the "colored waiting room" a panel door opens into a set of wooden steps leading up into the freight room. This sequence of spaces was planned to keep black and white passengers separate and to isolate the ticket clerk and operator.

The freight section is elevated 2'6" above the passenger section (it sits upon a separate, higher structural foundation in order to accommodate loading and unloading into and out of boxcars and trucks). The freight room measures 22'8" by 52'8". Built into the floor between the east and west freight doors, in the south end of the room, is a large original freight scale. Fenestration and openings are irregularly placed. In the east wall of this section, the façade is pierced by two 6'10"x10'4" horizontally sliding freight doors made of tongue-and-groove paneling with 1"x6" bracing. On the west side, three identical freight doors provide access. Above each of the five doors is an eight-light transom protected by seventeen steel bars. All of these doors are original. There are no other exterior openings in the freight section.

In the passenger section, fenestration and openings are also irregular, due to past alterations. In the east wall of the "colored waiting room" are one passenger panel door and two small windows (one in each restroom). On the west side there is a pair of full-size double-hung windows beside a passenger panel door. The central ticket office has a projecting window bay on both east and west sides. The east bay has three full-size double-hung windows with multiple lights, and the west bay has five full-size double-hung windows with multiple lights (the side windows provided the operator with a view down the track). The west wall of the "white waiting room" has one passenger door flanked by double-hung windows. In the east wall each restroom has a full-size double-hung window. In the north wall there is a pair of slightly smaller double-hung windows. The number of lights per window varies from 6/1 to 6/6; glazing and muntins are original except for those in the north pair. Above each passenger door is a three-light transom. Several of the windows are screened; one small east restroom window is barred by a modern steel grate. All doors in this section are original.

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Various interior features also help define the building's character. The interior ticket windows (between the ticket/operator's office and the two waiting rooms) and the interior and exterior door facings exhibit the original decorative millwork, as do the flat, wide baseboards. The wall covering in all passenger-section rooms consists of tongue-and-groove paneling. Drop ceilings are composed of a 1"x2" lath grid with chipboard panels, which replaces and replicates a former badly deteriorated drop ceiling. Shelves on either side of the two interior ticket windows exhibit the original decorative brackets. In the "white" restrooms, original metal lighting fixtures are still in place, though inoperative. All interior doorways in the passenger section have the original panel doors. The passenger section sits upon an exposed concrete foundation, but wooden flooring will be added when funds become available.

The functional character of the freight room is still intact. The names of local businesses, stencilled on the wall, still indicate where freight was stored for customers. A two-thousand-pound Fairbanks scale remains in a floor well in the south end of the room. Original electric conduit has been preserved in place, and one original metal light fixture remains. The freight room also retains its original 2"x8" plank floor and 12"x12" floor joist beams. The original foundation of 12"x12" wooden posts has been replaced with concrete block piers. The roof decking, 2"x6" rafters, 2"x6" tie beams, and 2"x6" X-brace-and-queen-post truss system are exposed, as is the balloon-frame system of 2"x6" vertical and horizontal framing members. The unadorned, unfinished nature of the room defines the strictly utilitarian character of this section of the depot.

On the west side of the property are five noncontributing objects: a flagpole, a 1949 MKT caboose, a track maintenance cart, a hay mower, and a granite monument. None of these objects has a significant effect on the integrity of the historic resource.

### Alterations

The Checotah MKT Depot was purchased from the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad Company in December of 1985 by the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society because the railroad expressed its intention to either demolish or sell the building in the immediate future. The railroad sold the building on the condition that the new owners remove it from railroad property. Subsequently, the depot was relocated on Paul Carr Drive in 1986.

The Checotah MKT Depot originally sat east of downtown Checotah on Gentry Street (US 266) between East Main and West Main. The building was oriented in a northeast-southwest line, parallel to the tracks and between the main track, on the east, and a side track, on the west. Other side tracks existed on both sides, serving warehouses and light industries on East and West Main. Until the 1930s there were no other structures or buildings on the west side of East Main or on the east side of West Main, as side tracks ran through these blocks. There are now several buildings which "back" onto the tracks. The original 1903 setting was thus fairly empty of development, which only occurred in the 1930s.

Presently, the depot sits approximately one hundred feet east of Paul

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Carr Drive (US 69 access road), two-tenths of a mile south of the intersection of Paul Carr Drive and US 266. The building's original northeast/southwest orientation has been maintained. The passenger entrance, which faced east along the railroad's main track, now faces west, toward Paul Carr Drive and US 69. As a result, the principal facade, which faced the main track, continues to face the transportation artery along which it is sited. The site continues to recall the basic qualities of the historic environment and setting. To the south and east of the building lies vacant property. To the north, along Paul Carr Drive and US 266, are various commercial buildings.

The MKT Railroad Company virtually abandoned the depot building in the late 1970s. Passenger service had been discontinued in 1965. The railroad declined to participate in a preservation effort, indicating that the depot was to be either demolished or sold and removed.<sup>10</sup> In 1985 the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society contacted the railroad in an effort to preserve the building, which was deteriorating. After negotiations the railroad offered to sell the building to the Checotah group, if the Society would remove the depot from railroad property. On December 30, 1985, the Society purchased the depot.<sup>11</sup> After researching and contacting owners of property along the tracks, the Society could find no property suitable for relocating the depot near its original location. In early 1986 one acre was acquired on Paul Carr Drive, and the depot was removed from MKT property in the spring of 1986.<sup>12</sup> The purchase and removal of the Checotah MKT Depot was accomplished in order to save it from demolition.

Soon after acquiring the property, the Society contacted a professional building mover, who examined the structure. Several situations had to be considered before attempting a move. The depot was constructed on two separate foundations; in essence, it was two structures nailed together between the freight room and a waiting room. The 24'x50' passenger section rested tenuously on a rotted-out 6"x12" post and 2"x6" beam foundation; in addition, the wood flooring in this section was virtually gone. The 24'x54' freight section sat on a solid 12"x12"x2'6" post and 12"x12" beam foundation, and its 2"x8" plank floor was still intact. The building's 104' length posed an additional challenge, as there was no equipment available to haul a structure this size. A third problem was posed by the building's height. Moving would require either raising nearby power lines or removing the roof. As the power company declined to cooperate, the roof tiles and decking were removed and the rafter-ridge-truss assembly was disassembled and stacked in consecutive layers for later reassembly.<sup>13</sup>

With the roof removed, the building could be separated into the two sections where they were joined, between the "colored waiting room" and the freight room. As the freight room did not have finished walls, the 2"x6" framing members and corner posts were all visible (the "wall" of the "colored waiting room" consisted solely of tongue-and-groove paneling nailed to the 2"x6" studs of the freight room's interior wall). The separation was made by sawing down through the 2"x6" wall plate, through the 3/4" thick exterior siding, and through the 2"x6" floor sill, next to

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the corner posts. The interior wall studs and wall plate remained with the freight section.<sup>14</sup>

The sections were placed on floats and transported to the new site, where a 12" concrete foundation had been poured for the passenger section and sets of 2'6" high concrete piers were in place to support the freight room. The freight section was set first, and the passenger section was then set at the proper position and height to rejoin the joists. Subsequently, the rafter assembly was put back into place, new decking was added to replace deteriorated decking, and the pantiles were reinstalled. Composition roofing was added in the southeast corner, to give temporary protection until the last of the pantiles are installed. New fascia boards replaced deteriorated boards at the eaves.<sup>15</sup>

After the depot was moved, the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society made an effort to stabilize the building's condition. The general consensus was that the character-defining exterior finishes and detailing, and the interior finishes, detailing, and room arrangement must be preserved. Paint on both interior and exterior walls was examined layer by layer, and MKT officials provided information that the railroad never used a "signature" color. Historic photos showed contrasting walls and trim. The interior and exterior were repainted with colors from the bottom paint layers. On the exterior, green was used for the wall cladding and red for the trim and detailing; on the interior, in the passenger section, a cream color was applied to the doors, window trim, paneling, and dado rails. Dado rails that had been broken and removed by vandals were replaced, a wall in the "colored women's restroom" was replaced by chipboard, and a kitchen counter faced with tongue-and-groove paneling was added in a recessed area of the "colored waiting room."<sup>16</sup>

A badly deteriorated drop ceiling, consisting of a 3' grid of 1"x2" lath and plywood panels, had been installed at an unknown date. Above this were the remains of a badly deteriorated original ceiling of tongue-and-groove paneling. As materials were not available to replace missing sections of the original ceiling, the drop ceiling was repaired with new grid and panels. Heating and air conditioning vents were installed in the drop ceiling. The condenser sits outside by the east wall, and the furnace was placed unobtrusively in a secondary service area, the "colored Men's restroom." The furnace vents to the outside through pipes on the east wall, in order to avoid puncturing the roof and disturbing the tile placement. Lighting in the passenger section was wired above the drop ceiling, and ceiling fans provide light and air circulation. In the freight section, the only alterations were in the form of wiring for ceiling fans. Old conduit was left in place, however, and the single remaining original light fixture still remains.<sup>17</sup>

On the exterior, alterations are limited to the loss of beveled siding on the south end and to the replacement of freight platforms which had existed on both east and west sides of the building at various times.

The move's effects on the Checotah MKT Depot's architectural integrity were minimal, though the move and the new location have affected the property's historical associations. Care was taken to protect the interior and exterior features in transit. The only visual evidence of dismantling and reassembly is a butt joint in the drop siding on the east and west exterior walls, where the two sections were

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separated. Despite historical and modern alterations, the building still retains its essential 1904 appearance. The depot still retains a high degree of architectural integrity and is a rare example of Oklahoma Territorial-Era railroad architecture.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Plan and Elevation of Combo. Depot for Checotah, I.T., Aug. 1898, Drawing No. 402.2, Katy Railroad Historical Society (Mesquite, TX and St. Charles, MO); Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Checotah, Oklahoma, March, 1901 (Microfilm). Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

<sup>2</sup>Clarkson's Fire Insurance Map, Checotah, Oklahoma, April, 1903, Library, Oklahoma Historical Society; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Checotah, Oklahoma, February, 1905; 1907 photograph, "100th Anniversary Edition," McIntosh County Democrat, 8 June 1972; "Additions and Alterations to Combination Station, Checotah, May 1912," Drawing No. 402.201(a), MKT Railroad Company, Katy Railroad Historical Society (Mesquite, TX and St. Charles, MO).

<sup>3</sup>Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Checotah, Oklahoma, July, 1909; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Checotah, Oklahoma, March, 1920; Drawing No. 402.201(b), 10 May 1920, Bureau of Valuation, Interstate Commerce Commission, Records of the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society; "Combination Station at Checotah, Oklahoma, March 15, 1948," Drawing No. 402.218, MKT Railroad Company, Katy Railroad Historical Society (Mesquite, TX and St. Charles, MO).

<sup>4</sup>McIntosh County Democrat, 5 February 1931; *ibid.*, 12 December 1931; Report of the State Highway Commission of Oklahoma for the Years 1933-1934 (Oklahoma City, OK: State Highway Commission, 1934), 86, 88; Report of the State Highway Commission of Oklahoma for the Years 1937-1938 (Oklahoma City, OK: State Highway Commission, 1938), 176, 182; Muskogee Phoenix, 6 May 1988.

<sup>5</sup>"Combination Station at Checotah, Oklahoma, 1948."

<sup>6</sup>Emmy Scott Stidham, personal communication, 21 January 1991.

<sup>7</sup>H. Roger Grant and Donovan Hofsommer, "'Katy' Depots of Oklahoma: A Pictorial History," Chronicles of Oklahoma 50 (1972): 331-333; H. Roger Grant, Kansas Depots (Topeka, KS: Ives & Sons, 1990), 94; Edwin P. Alexander, Down at the Depot: American Railroad Stations from 1831 to 1920 (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1970), 15.

<sup>8</sup>Grant and Hofsommer, "'Katy' Depots," 333, 337.

<sup>9</sup>Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Checotah, Oklahoma, 1898, 1901, 1905, 1909, 1914, 1920, 1929 (Microfilm), Western History Collections.

<sup>10</sup>S.H.P.O. to Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad Company, 26 February, 1981 (copy),



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Records of the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society; John Jacobs (MKT) to S.H.P.O. 5 March 1981 (copy), Records of the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society; Lake Eufaula World, 21 November 1985.

<sup>11</sup>Minutes of Meeting, 12 September 1985, 10 October 1985, Checotah Landmark Preservation Society, Records of the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society; McIntosh County Democrat, 30 January 1986; Emmy Scott Stidham to Senior Lease Manager (MKT), 17 September 1985, Records of the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society; John Jacobs to Emmy Scott Stidham, 12 December 1985, Records of the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society; Bill of Sale, 30 December 1985, Records of the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society.

<sup>12</sup>Lake Eufaula World, 21 November 1985; Checotah Historical Highlights, 1890-1990 (Checotah, OK: Privately printed, 1990), 114; Prospectus, 12 December 1985, Checotah Landmark Preservation Society (Lou Sharp, Finance Chairman), Records of the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society.

<sup>13</sup>Leo Williams, interview by D. Everett, Checotah, Oklahoma, 21 January 1991; Minutes of Meeting, 10 October 1985.

<sup>14</sup>Leo Williams, interview by D. Everett, Checotah, Oklahoma, 21 January 1991.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.; Checotah Historical Highlights, 114; Emmy Scott Stidham, personal communication, Checotah, Oklahoma, 21 January 1991.

<sup>16</sup>Jo Sharp (architectural/interior consultant to Checotah Landmark Preservation Society), interview by D. Everett, Checotah, Oklahoma, 21 January 1991.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

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Rail transportation first came to Oklahoma in 1870 when the MKT Railway Company began laying track south from Kansas through Indian Territory. The track generally followed the path of the Texas Road, a well-known travel route from Kansas to Texas. As the "Katy" moved southward, crews erected temporary depots, usually consisting of remodeled boxcars, at the various terminal points. By January 1872 the southernmost terminus was Muskogee. From Muskogee construction proceeded rapidly southward, and in February the end of track reached a well-known cattle watering hole and travel-stop on the Texas Road at the present site of downtown Checotah. The MKT finished its Kansas-Oklahoma-Texas line by the end of 1872, providing the Territory with its first easy access to settlers and markets. By the turn of the century the MKT expanded its rail service with trunk lines to the east and west.

In the course of its Oklahoma tenure the Katy built more than one hundred permanent depots of varying architectural styles and plans. The "standard combination station" constructed in Checotah c. 1890 and remodeled in 1903-1904 was typical of the economical wood-frame buildings allotted to smaller communities all along the main north-south MKT line and its subsidiaries. Because of its chronically weak financial profile, the Katy preferred to utilize designs for cheap and easy-to-build depots. The floor plans were generally standardized, though some variation was allowed in terms of size, depending on the community. Exterior detailing, such as roof type, decorative brackets, and board-and-batten siding, was also somewhat standardized. The arrangement and placement of exterior trimwork varied in order to give casual observers the impression that each town's station was different. It is in the detailing that an individual station took on the character of an architectural style, in a vernacular form; for example, the Checotah MKT Depot exhibits decorative elements identified with Stick style.

The town of Checotah, which grew up along and west of the MKT tracks from 1872 through the 1880s, at first merited only the semblance of a depot. No record remains of this first structure, but it was probably no more than a freight car where paperwork was processed for ranchers who shipped thousands of cattle from Texas to McIntosh County ranches and onward to Kansas markets. The Checotah station consisted primarily of a water tower and railroad-owned holding pens for cattle. The first structure in what is now the town was a residence built in 1884. In 1890 a store, gin, and other houses were built, and in the 1890s the town became a trading center for farm products and manufactured goods for a regional population. In 1898 the community of six hundred was large enough to warrant incorporation.

The emergence of the town as a viable entity c. 1890 apparently convinced the MKT Railway Company to build a "permanent" 20'x40' wood-frame combination depot, which remained in use until remodeled and enlarged in 1898. The Stick-style, wood-frame, board-and-batten building of 1890 included a 20' freight room, a 12' waiting room, and an 8' office. In 1898 the freight room was increased by a new 50' addition. In the 1890-1891 period Checotah became one of the largest MKT shipping points between Kansas and Texas. In the surrounding thirty-mile trade area the economy depended on agriculture, including cotton, corn, hay, orchard products, cattle, and hogs. The

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town grew rapidly as a regional trading center. In the year 1901 a boom of land sales put thousands more acres into cultivation, and the town's population grew to more than 1,500. For the railroad, 1900-1902 were banner years; freight and passenger receipts at the Checotah station grew by tens of thousands of dollars.

In the face of increasing traffic, the Katy again decided to improve its station in Checotah. In the 1903-1904 period the building was enlarged to 24'x133', and the floor plan included two waiting rooms (an outer room for women, and an inner room for men, where smoking was allowed), a ticket/operator's office, a baggage room, and a large freight room. When completed in early 1904, the depot had assumed its present form. Other elements of the station--water tower, cotton platform, agent's house, and coal shed--remained in place, but due to citizens' complaints the stockyards were moved outside the city limits.<sup>10</sup>

Architectural Significance

The Checotah MKT Depot is architecturally significant within the architectural context of Checotah, Oklahoma because the building is the town's only extant example of Stick style. It is also significant because its interior expresses the practice of racial segregation.

In the course of its 1903-1904 remodeling, the Checotah Depot kept its vernacular form of Stick style. Stick is characterized by a gabled roof with decorative trusses, overhanging eaves, and flared eaves; by wooden wall cladding with contrasting vertical and horizontal trim patterns; and by eave brackets.<sup>11</sup> The style was popular in residential housing from 1860 to the turn of the century. Though in Checotah there are other examples of wood-frame construction dating from the 1890-1920 period, none but the depot exhibit the decorative elements of a vernacular form of Stick style: horizontal wall cladding contrasting with vertical trimwork, flared eaves, side-gabled roof, decorative scissor-bracing in one gable end, and eave brackets. The depot illustrates a method of construction and floor plan typical of Territorial-Era depots: The balloon-frame structure encompassed a central ticket office/operations area flanked by a passenger waiting area on one side and a freight-handling and storage area on the other.<sup>12</sup>

The depot's history reveals information about social conventions in early twentieth-century Oklahoma and illustrates one way in which those conventions influenced architecture. In 1907 Oklahoma's first state legislature enacted a racial segregation, or "Jim Crow" law. Public transportation companies were required to provide separate accommodations for white and black patrons. Black passengers were thus required to wait in a separate room.<sup>13</sup> In Checotah in 1907 the MKT converted the baggage room into a "colored waiting room" and added ladies' and men's restrooms in all three waiting rooms.<sup>14</sup> This system of passenger segregation persisted until the 1960s and is noted on railroad and I.C.C. floor plans for the Checotah depot, as well as on a 1920 Sanborn map. Today, the "colored" and "white" waiting rooms remain as they were during the decades of "Jim Crow," and they greatly enhance the depot's ability to impart a sense of the social reality of segregation of the races in Oklahoma.

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Through prosperity and decline in the economy of McIntosh County, the Checotah MKT Depot was used by the railroad until the late 1970s. Passengers continued to use the facility until 1965, and after that time freight was once more stored in the "colored waiting room" area. Alterations were made in 1931-1937, when the outer, or "white women's," waiting room was removed in order to widen US 266/Gentry Street; this left one "white" and one "colored" waiting room intact. In the 1940s, a 10' section was removed from the end of the freight room, and the freight door was moved from the end to the (present) west side.<sup>15</sup> When MKT operations ceased, the depot was in fair structural condition, though the exterior and interior finishes were deteriorating. Despite these alterations, the building appears substantially as it appeared in 1904.

In order to save the Checotah Katy Depot from demolition, it was purchased by the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society in 1985. The MKT Railroad Company mandated the building's removal from railroad property. The depot has been relocated in an environment resembling its 1903-1929 environment: near transportation arteries, overlooking but not within a commercial district, and oriented northeast to southwest. Removal to the new location and stabilization of exterior and interior finishes have left intact a valuable architectural resource in northeast Oklahoma.

The Checotah MKT Depot has been evaluated against other similar resources in the surrounding region. There are no other surviving historic depots in McIntosh County; however, in the northeastern region of the state (Preservation Management Region 3) there are four other surviving Territorial-Era depots: The MKT depot in Broken Arrow (1902, remodeled 1903); Kaw City Santa Fe Depot (1902); Jenks Midland Valley Depot (1903); and Skiatook Midland Valley Depot (1905). All are wood-frame buildings exhibiting vernacular Stick style. The MKT depot in Broken Arrow has been moved into an inappropriate setting, an amusement park called Discoveryland. The Kaw City depot, listed on the National Register in 1982 (as a moved building), has retained much of its historic exterior; its freight room, however, has been remodeled on the inside to accommodate museum exhibits and storage. The Jenks depot, once a two-story building, has been moved, and the upper story has been removed. The Skiatook depot has also had its upper story removed. Thus, measured against these examples, the Checotah MKT Depot, though moved, has retained a greater degree of architectural integrity than other similar resources in the region.<sup>16</sup>

Territorial-Era depots, though once numerous, are now rare in Oklahoma. Only seven other Territorial-Era depots exist in the state. These, their dates of construction, and architectural style are: Waurika (1901; brick; western commercial/Gothic); Shawnee (1902; stone; Richardsonian Romanesque); Lindsey (1903; wood frame; Stick decoration); Paul's Valley (1903; wood frame; Stick decoration); Elgin (1904; wood frame; Stick decoration); Sentinel (1906; wood frame; no style); and El Reno (1907; brick; Mission/Prairie). Of the twelve Territorial-Era depots (including those in the northeastern region) only those in Kaw City, Shawnee, El Reno, Lindsey, and Paul's Valley still retain a high degree of integrity.<sup>17</sup> All five are listed in the National Register.

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Although the Checotah depot has been moved, it retains a high degree of integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. It was moved by the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society in order to prevent its demolition by the railroad. Virtually all of the alterations to the building were made before 1941; moving had only a minor effect on the property. The exterior and interior have been stabilized, and the new setting has returned the building to an environment similar to that of the original setting. The depot now serves as a railroad-and-community-history museum and tourist information center. On the grounds is a 1949 MKT caboose, No. 205. The Checotah MKT Depot is an example of an increasingly rare historic property type, the Territorial-Era railroad depot.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>H. Roger Grant and Charles W. Bohi, The Country Railroad Station in America (Sioux Falls, SD: Center for Western Studies, 1988), 12, 17-23, 69-70; Julian Cavalier, Classic American Railroad Stations (New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., Inc., 1980), 9, 19; Carroll L. V. Meeks, The Railroad Station: An Architectural History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975 [1956]), passim.

<sup>2</sup>V. V. Masterson, The Katy Railroad and the Last Frontier (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 75, 153; W. E. Derrick and James Smallwood, "Miles of Track: The Coming of Railroads to Oklahoma," Red River Valley Historical Review 6 (1981): 88-89; Archie P. McDonald, "The Texas Road," Red River Valley Historical Review 6 (1981): 58; McIntosh County Democrat, 20 May 1937; Scott Baxter, "Transportation in Oklahoma to 1920," Resource Protection Planning Project, Region 3 (Oklahoma State University, for the Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey, 1986), 17, 19, 22.

<sup>3</sup>H. Roger Grant and Donovan Hofsommer, "'Katy' Depots of Oklahoma: A Pictorial History," Chronicles of Oklahoma 50 (1972): 331-333, 337; H. Roger Grant, Kansas Depots (Topeka, KS: Ives & Sons, 1990), 94.

<sup>4</sup>Grant, Country Railroad Station, 23; Edwin P. Alexander, Down at the Depot: American Railroad Stations from 1831 to 1920 (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1970), 15.

<sup>5</sup>Frank W. Jones, interview by Effie S. Jackson, 5 September 1937 (Early Railroad Development), Indian-Pioneer Papers 31:499-96, Archives, Oklahoma Historical Society; L. W. Wilson, "The Start, Operation, and Finish of the Lazy S Ranch," (Manuscript), Indian-Pioneer Papers 11:464-75, Archives, Oklahoma Historical Society; Checotah Enquirer, 7 March 1902.

<sup>6</sup>Checotah Enquirer, 7 March 1902; Glenn Fraser, "Brief History of Checotah," The Periscope (Checotah, OK: n.p., 1915), 5-7.

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<sup>7</sup> Plan and Elevation of Combination Depot for Checotah, I.T., Aug. 1898, Drawing No. 402.2, Katy Railroad Historical Society (Mesquite, TX and St. Charles, Mo); Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Checotah, Oklahoma, March, 1901 (Microfilm), Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.

<sup>8</sup> Checotah Enquirer, 7 March 1902; Population of Oklahoma and Indian Territory, 1907, Bulletin 89, Bureau of the Census (Washington, D.C.: G. P. O., 1907), 22, 31; "Information Concerning Indian Territory, Compiled by Ex-United States Land Appraisers," (Muskogee, I.T.: Indian Territory Publishing Company, 1901), 65-66.

<sup>9</sup> Clarkson's Fire Insurance Map, Checotah, Oklahoma, April, 1903, Library, Oklahoma Historical Society; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Checotah, Oklahoma, February, 1905.

<sup>10</sup> "MKT Plat, Checotah, as of January 8, 1902," Drawing No. 525-VII, Records of the State Corporation Commission, Oklahoma State Archives, Oklahoma Department of Libraries, Oklahoma City; Clarkson's Fire Insurance Map, Checotah, Oklahoma, April, 1903; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Checotah, Oklahoma, February, 1905; Walter W. Siegrist, "Early Checotah History," "100th Anniversary Edition," McIntosh County Democrat, 8 June 1972.

<sup>11</sup> 1907 photograph, "100th Anniversary Edition," McIntosh County Democrat, 8 June 1972; Virginia and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 255-57.

<sup>12</sup> Grant and Hofsommer, "'Katy' Depots," 332-33; Marshall Gettys and Bill E. Peavler, "Railroad Depots in Oklahoma," Outlook in Historic Conservation (March/April 1982), 1.

<sup>13</sup> Jimmie Franklin, Blacks in Oklahoma (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 17; Gettys and Peavler, "Railroad Depots," 1.

<sup>14</sup> "Additions and Alterations to Combination Station, Checotah, May 1912," Drawing No. 402.201(a), MKT Railroad Company, Katy Railroad Historical Society (Mesquite, TX and St. Charles, MO); Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Checotah, Oklahoma, July, 1909; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Checotah, Oklahoma, March, 1920; Drawing No. 402.201(b), 10 May 1920, Bureau of Valuation, Interstate Commerce Commission, Records of the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society; "Combination Station at Checotah, Oklahoma, March 15, 1948," Drawing No. 402.218, MKT Railroad Company, Katy Railroad Historical Society (Mesquite, TX and St. Charles, MO).

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<sup>15</sup>"Additions and Alterations, 1912"; "Combination Station at Checotah, Oklahoma, 1948"; Muskogee Phoenix, 21 November 1985.

<sup>16</sup>Information compiled from National Register of Historic Places files and Oklahoma Landmark Inventory files in the State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Checotah, Oklahoma, 1901, 1905, 1909, 1914, 1920, 1929.

Microfilm. Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

Sharp, Jo. Interview with Dianna Everett, 21 January 1991. Checotah, Oklahoma.

Williams, Leo. Interview with Dianna Everett, 21 January 1991. Checotah, Oklahoma.

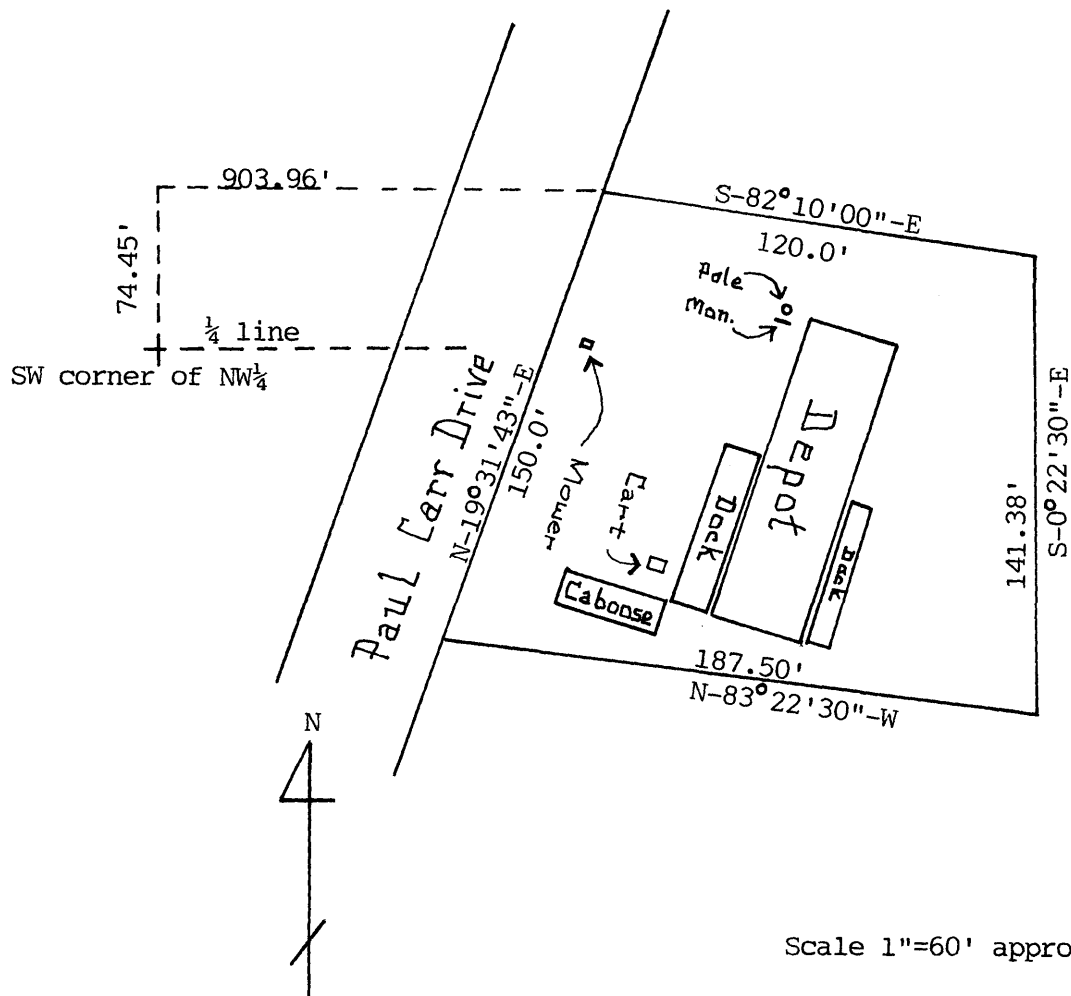


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Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 2

CHECOTAH MKT DEPOT, CHECOTAH, OK



Scale 1"=60' approx.

**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)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1904-1907

Significant Dates

1904

1907

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

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

Summary

The Checotah MKT Depot is architecturally significant because it is the only extant example of Stick-style railroad architecture in Checotah, Oklahoma. It retains a high degree of integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling and still strongly conveys the sense of its historic function. It is one of five Territorial-Era (1861-1907) wood-frame depots remaining in northeast Oklahoma. The Checotah depot was built c. 1890 and was remodeled and enlarged in 1903-1904. Its 1904 form, style and internal/external detailing have been preserved intact, with the exception of two alterations performed by the railroad before 1941. One of these alterations, the 1907 remodeling of a baggage room into a "colored waiting room," illustrates a major legal and social change in Oklahoma's public transportation facilities, the enactment of a racial segregation law in 1907. This statute was current through the 1960s. The depot's exterior and interior detailing, Stick style, and typical railroad floor plan illustrate the commonality of Territorial-Era railroad facilities in Oklahoma. Although the Checotah MKT Depot has been removed from its original location, its architectural integrity has no peer among its four other contemporaries in northeast Oklahoma.

Historical Context

In the early twentieth century American railroads followed a generally consistent pattern in providing depot facilities for small communities. A temporary, portable depot would be erected at a terminus, and if a town grew up and lasted, a permanent depot would be built. West of the Mississippi, these first permanent buildings were seldom replaced unless the passenger traffic increased enough to warrant enlargement of the facility. A station usually consisted of depot, water tower, coal chutes, platforms, and other necessary structures. By 1916 there were 85,000 such stations across America. Most railroads had standard plans for "combination" depots, or those that housed both passenger and freight operations under one roof.<sup>1</sup> The Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railway Company (later, Railroad Company) followed a similar pattern as it built southward through Indian Territory and later eastward and westward through Oklahoma.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

"Additions and Alterations to Combination Station, Checotah, May 1912," Drawing No. 402.201(a), MKT Railroad Company. Katy Railroad Historical Society, Mesquite, Texas, and St. Charles, Missouri.

Checotah Historical Highlights, 1890-1990. Checotah, OK: Privately Printed, 1990.

Clarkson Fire Insurance Map, Checotah, Oklahoma, 1903. Library, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

"Combination Station at Checotah, Oklahoma, March 15, 1948," Drawing No. 402.218, MKT Railroad Company. Katy Railroad Historical Society, Mesquite, Texas, and St. Charles, Missouri.

Drawing No. 402.201(b), 10 May 1920, Bureau of Valuation, Interstate Commerce Commission.

Records of the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society, Checotah, Oklahoma.

Lake Eufaula World, 21 November 1985.

McIntosh County Democrat, 8 June 1972.

Muskogee Phoenix, 6 May 1988.

Plan and Elevation of Combo. Depot for Checotah, I.T., Aug., 1898, Drawing No. 402.2.

Katy Railroad Historical Society, Mesquite, Texas, and St. Charles, Missouri.

Records of the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society, Checotah, Oklahoma.

Records of the State Corporation Commission, Oklahoma.  See continuation sheet State Archives.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

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 Less than one (1) acre

UTM References

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

B \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_

D \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

This tract of land is situated in the West half of the West half of Section 32, Township 12 North, Range 17 East of the I.B.&M., McIntosh County, Oklahoma, and is bounded as follows: Beginning 74.45 feet due North and 903.96 feet due East of the Southwest corner of the Northwest quarter; thence S-82°10'00"-E 120 feet; thence S-0°22'30"-E 141.38 feet; thence N-83°22'30"-W 187.5 feet; thence N-19°31'43"-E 150.0 feet to the beginning, having described an enclosed polygon including one contributing building and three noncontributing objects.

**Boundary Justification** The boundaries (measures and angles of declination) herein described are based upon a survey conducted in 1986 and upon the legally recorded boundaries appearing in McIntosh Co. deed records. The Checotah Preservation Society's tract on Paul Carr Drive encompasses approximately one acre; but due to the fact that the tract was not historically associated with the significant property, the western portion of the tract has been excluded. Boundaries herein described encompass only the contributing and noncontributing resources making up the property.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Dr. Dianna Everett  
organization Checotah Landmark Preservation Society date May 15, 1991  
street & number 2510 Countrywood Lane telephone (405) 348-4272  
city or town Edmond state Oklahoma zip code 73034

## 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)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1904-1907

Significant Dates

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N/A

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See continuation sheet

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Lake Eufaula World, 21 November 1985.  
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Records of the Checotah Landmark Preservation Society. Checotah, Oklahoma.  
Records of the State Corporation Commission, Oklahoma.  See continuation sheet State Archives.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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 Less than one (1) acre

UTM References

A 15 269830 3928050  
Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

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See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Dr. Dianna Everett

organization Checotah Landmark Preservation Society date May 15, 1991

street & number 2510 Countrywood Lane telephone (405) 348-4272

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