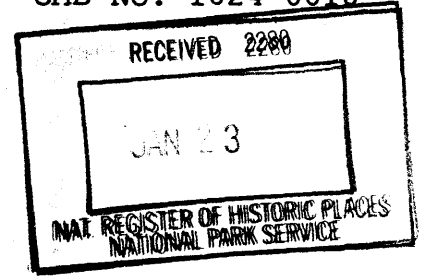


NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Hardy Murphy Coliseum

other names/site number Gene Autry Coliseum

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 600 Lake Murray Drive South not for publication N/A
city or town Ardmore vicinity N/A
state Oklahoma code OK county Carter code 019
zip code 73401

3. 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)


Signature of certifying official

1/19/06
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 for additional comments.)

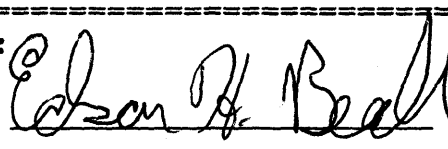
Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau


4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- 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

 3/8/06

other (explain): _____


Signature of Keeper Date
of Action

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: fair

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: fair

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

WPA Standardized Style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE
roof METAL
walls STONE
CONCRETE
other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====
8. Statement of Significance
=====

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ECONOMICS

Period of Significance 1941-1949

=====
8. Statement of Significance (Continued)
=====

Significant Dates 1943

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder White, J.B., and Son, architects
Works Projects Administration, builder

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====
9. Major Bibliographical References
=====

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- 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

Name of repository: _____

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property 10 Acres MOL

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
1	<u>14</u>	<u>673160</u>	<u>3781430</u>	3	<u>14</u>	<u>673490</u>	<u>3781560</u>
2	<u>14</u>	<u>673480</u>	<u>3781440</u>	4	<u>14</u>	<u>673170</u>	<u>3781560</u>

N/A See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Cynthia Savage, Architectural Historian, for City of Ardmore

organization ARCH Consulting date July 2005

street & number 364 CR 1230 telephone 405/459-6200

city or town Pocasset state OK zip code 73079

=====
Additional Documentation
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Ardmore, Mayor Martin Dyer

street & number P.O. Box 249 telephone

city or town Ardmore state OK zip code 73402

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Hardy Murphy Coliseum
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SUMMARY

The Hardy Murphy Coliseum, located on the southeast limits of Ardmore, Carter County, Oklahoma, is a one- and two-story, native stone and concrete building. Construction on the fairgrounds building and arena began in 1941 as a Works Projects Administration project, in cooperation with the city of Ardmore. Unable to procure the metal necessary to roof the arena due to war-time shortages in 1943, the arena remained uncovered until 1948-1949. At that time, the city again sponsored a bond issue to place a large, metal, barrel roof over the arena and finish the electrical wiring in the exhibition portion of the building.

The coliseum, designed by the local architectural firm of J.B. White and Son, exhibits a modest Art Moderne influence in the rounded corners with glass block ribbon windows of the one-story, front section of the building. However, the building more strongly expresses the rustic, functional stylistic characteristics common to WPA-built buildings and is, therefore, stylistically classified as WPA Standardized style. The building has multiple entrances. The primary entrance is centrally located on the facade and consists of double, nonhistoric, aluminum, glazed slab doors with a large transom covered by a green cloth awning. The other pedestrian entries, including two on the facade, three on the north side and three on the south side, are double, metal, slab with lights. The nonhistoric, far east entry on the south side is double, metal, glazed slab and also has transom covered by a striped, green, cloth awning. There are a multitude of oversize openings on both the north and south sides which provided access to the arena. On the north side, eight of the original nine openings remain open with the remaining one being filled with painted concrete block. All nine of the oversize openings on the south elevation have been filled, four with painted concrete, two with metal overhead doors, one with concrete and a metal slab pedestrian door, one with painted concrete blocks and one with the above-mentioned glazed slab entry. The metal windows in the building include two-over-one, hung; one-over-one, hung; three-over-one, hung; and, one-over-one, fixed. The windows all have concrete sills. Decorative details are minimal and include double and triple windows, concrete coping, cloth awnings, glass block ribbon windows, concrete entry surrounds and full-height stone pilasters.

The building retains a good degree of integrity. The most notable changes to the building include the infill of the oversize openings and the addition of a huge, metal addition to the rear of the building. Although the openings have been closed off, the original outline of the opening remains apparent so the

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historical rhythm of the openings is maintained. Within the last couple of years, the historic six metal barns behind the arena, constructed in 1948, were demolished and a large metal addition attached to the rear. Just off the back of the old arena is a large, covered, stall area with tall metal pens to hold various livestock. Similar to the historic building, this section of the addition has eight oversize openings on each side to facilitate movement of the animals. The majority of the openings have metal overhead doors. On the south side of the stall area of the addition is a large expanse of metal corrals that reportedly have been in place for a number of years. Off the backside of the stall area is a large open-sided, metal arena. The arena has a side-gabled, metal roof and runs north-south, unlike the rest of the coliseum which extends east-west. Although the rear addition is longer than the original building, it obstructs only the rear elevation of the coliseum, is only one-story in height and, due to the difference in building material, is easily discernible from the historic construction.

The front landscaping of the building has also been modified. Previous to 1994, a circular drive was created through the front lawn. A short fence encircled the front lawn which has also been removed. To the front of the coliseum, on the west side of the nonhistoric circular drive, in a grassy area is a modern sign. The sign has a rock base and multiple small advertisements above this. To the direct east of the sign is a flag pole and south of the sign is a large buffalo. All of these objects are included within the resource count as noncontributing objects as none were present during the period of significance.

An existing chainlink fence restricts access to the north and south sides of the fairgrounds. A similar fence was constructed in 1948-1949. The fence is used as the boundary marker for the north and west sides. As the fence extends to the building on both sides, it is not counted as a separate resource within the nomination.

To the southwest side of the new arena is a noncontributing, cinderblock building. The side-gabled building contains restrooms. At present, there is also a noncontributing portable building located to the west of the first entry on the south side of the addition. Neither of these buildings have any impact on the historic building.

The boundaries for the nomination form a rectangular around the building, including the corrals on the north side. The other nonhistoric buildings located south of the coliseum on the fairground property were excluded as they

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are clearly separate buildings and are not historically associated with the coliseum. The west and east boundaries are respectively the street in front of the building and the chainlink fence to the rear of the new arena. The north boundary was defined by the chain link fence dividing the coliseum from the adjacent city park, called Whittington Park. Eliminated from the north boundary is the 1915 locomotive which brought emergency personnel to Ardmore following a devastating explosion which rocked the town. The locomotive is separately fenced to prevent climbing on it. Directly to the south of the locomotive and within its enclosure is the grave for Buck and Silver Cloud, Hardy Murphy's show horses. Recently, the pink marble stone marking the horses graves was moved to a flower bed around the flag pole in front of the coliseum. The marker, thus, becomes a noncontributing object.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The Hardy Murphy Coliseum is a combination one- and two-story, native stone and concrete building. The center section of the front exhibition portion of the building and the expansive historic arena are two-stories in height. Flanking the two-story center section and wrapping around the front part of the arena is a U-shaped one-story area. The one-story walls and front, center two-story section have native stone walls. The second story walls are concrete, simply ornamented with three horizontal incised lines which fully encircle the second floor. The roof of the building is flat, except over the arena which is covered by a large, metal, barrel roof. Two large HVAC units have been placed on the front corners of the two-story flat roof of the arena and there are various smaller units located on other areas of the flat roof. Wrapping around the building is a concrete coping. The foundation of the building is concrete.

The facade of the building fronts west onto South Lake Murray Drive. All the different levels of the symmetrical building are readily visible from the west elevation. The barrel roof of the arena looms over the lower front section of the building. The arena roof has three metal, louvered, vent openings in the center, above the central two-story section. Below the barrel roof and set back from the front, native stone section of the building is the concrete, two-story wall of the arena. In addition to the three incised, horizontal bands extending across the wall, there are four sets of windows on each side. The metal windows are one-over-one, fixed. On each side, the center two windows are triple and the other two sets of windows are double.

The larger, stone, U-shaped section of the facade consists of the two-story

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center portion with small one-story wings connected to the larger one-story, wraparound wings by recessed hyphens. The two-story section of the building has squared corners, in contrast to the rounded corners of both sets of wings. The front of the two-story section is composed of three symmetrical bays. Each of the outside bays have double, three-over-one, hung, metal windows on both the first and second floors. In the center bay, there is a double, aluminum, glazed slab entry with a transom on the first floor. Above this, is a double, three-over-one, hung, metal set of windows. All of these openings are topped by green, cloth awnings. Separating the center bay from the flanking bays are double, projected, stone pilasters. The north and south sides of the two-story bay are also symmetrical. On the first floor of both sides are two single, metal, two-over-one, hung windows with a third blank window on the inside. The upper pane of the center window on the south side has been filled with an air conditioning unit. The front portion of the second floor has three single, metal, two-over-one, hung windows on each side. Recessed slightly, the remaining wall of the second floor of the center section has four sets of windows on each side. The first three sets of windows are double, metal, two-over-one, hung windows. The easternmost window is single, double, metal, two-over-one, hung window.

The one-story wings flanking the two-story center section of the facade have a wide, double stepped, projection in about the center of the curved wall. The only window opening in this section of the front are the triple, glass block, wraparound windows. The windows have thirty glass blocks per section and have metal frames. The adjacent recessed hyphens each contain an entry with a large concrete surround. The doors are metal slab with rectangular lights. The upper wall of the surround is ornamented with a wide, double stepped, projection and a single light. The outside wings match the inside one-story wings, including the wraparound glass block windows and double stepped projections, with the exception of both corners being rounded. Both rounded corners feature the thirty block, triple, metal, wraparound ribbons.

The north side of the coliseum features twelve, evenly-spaced, one-over-one, hung, metal windows in the one-story stone section. Smaller than the other windows in the building, the windows are set so their sills are even with the top of the doorways. On the east side of the wraparound portion of the one-story stone section of the north side are two matching, one-over-one, hung, metal windows and double, metal, slab doors with rectangular lights. A modern, red and white sign above the entry notes that there is no smoking in the building; there are similar signs above the entries on the south side. East of this, in the arena section of the building, there are eleven openings evenly

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spaced along the ground floor. All but the far east opening match the dimensions of the triple windows above. The easternmost opening is narrower, matching in width the double window above it. Two of the openings, the westernmost and the center openings, contain an entry surrounded by stone with projected stone walls the same height and width of the other openings. The doors are double, metal, slab with rectangular lights. West of the westernmost entry are two metal, two-over-one, hung windows, the only windows on the first floor of this section of the north elevation. Of the remaining nine openings, one has been completely filled with concrete block, painted yellow. The other openings all remain open with no doors. The concrete second story of the arena sits atop the lower stone walls. The second story is ornamented with triple, horizontal, incised bands which extend the full length of the wall. On the far west side of the second floor is a double, one-over-one, metal, fixed window. Then there are fifteen sets of triple, one-over-one, metal, fixed windows. The easternmost second story window is also a double, one-over-one, metal, fixed window. Systematically separating the elevation into nine sections are metal drain spouts, painted yellow.

The rear elevation of the coliseum has been obscured by the addition of the covered, metal stall area; however, the rear wall remains uncovered within the addition and much of the second floor remains visible from the outside. The stone first floor of the back elevation has a large center opening which has a metal overhead door. On either side of the center opening are two sets of multi-pane, metal, casement windows. Flanking the casement windows are more oversize openings, the closest ones to the casement windows having metal overhead doors. The two additional outside openings are smaller than the other openings with the far outside opening being about half the width of the other openings. On the north side, the two outside openings remain open with no doors. The south side openings have been infilled, mainly with concrete, painted yellow. The smaller opening on the south side also contains a high, rectangular, fixed, metal window. The other south side opening has a double window, covered with metal, and a single, metal, slab, pedestrian door, as well as some vent equipment. The concrete second floor has three incised horizontal bands and ten windows. The windows are one-over-one, metal, fixed, like the other windows on the second floor. The window pattern is double, triple, double, double, double, double, double, triple, double. The center second floor windows are obscured by the gable roof of the addition but they remain in place.

The south elevation is identical to the north elevation, including the historic entries, first and second story window placement and decorative details.

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However, the larger openings for the arena section of the building are not uncovered on the south wall. The one to the east of the easternmost entry has been filled with cinder block, painted yellow. The adjacent opening has been filled with concrete and a single, metal, slab, pedestrian door with a rectangular light, all of which has been painted yellow. The next two openings have metal overhead doors, also painted yellow. Next to the center historic entry is another concrete filled opening with a metal slab door. The next two openings have been infilled with concrete and a single, rectangular, fixed window in each. The next opening has been filled with vertical wood and a double, aluminum, glazed slab entry. A larger, striped, white and green, cloth awning, supported by metal poles, shelters this nonhistoric entry. The last, smaller opening has been infilled with concrete and a single, rectangular, fixed window. The second story fenestration pattern is identical to that of the north elevation.

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS

The large rear addition has gabled, metal roofs and metal walls. Extending from the rear of the historic arena is a large stall area. This part of the addition has a front-gabled, metal roof which peaks just above the center second floor windows of the historic arena. The first section of the stall area matches the width of the historic building. It then widens slightly, maintaining this width back to the open-sided arena. There are two pedestrian, slab, metal doors on the south elevation and one on the north elevation. Additionally, there are eight oversize openings with metal overhead doors on either side of the stall area. At the east end of the stall area is a large, metal, side-gabled, open-sided arena. The new arena extends north-south, unlike the rest of the building. Off the north side of the addition is a large corral area. The corrals predate the addition. Due to their location east of the historic building, they have no impact on the integrity of the coliseum.

Off the south side of the arena is a dropped, flat roofed, concession area. On the west side of the concession area of the outdoor arena is a side-gabled, cinder block building. The building has a metal roof and a concrete foundation. There is a single, metal, slab door on the west side. On the east side, there are three, metal, slab doors and two sets of windows. The south window has a center fixed window flanked by one-over-one, hung, metal windows. The north window is double, wood, fixed. The building was erected in the past five years, along with the coliseum's metal addition; as such, it is a noncontributing resource.

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Another noncontributing building is located immediately east of the first large opening in the coliseum addition. This portable building serves as the Bedding Office. The front-gabled, composition board building has a metal, glazed, paneled door flanked by one-over-one, metal, hung windows. On the west side of the building is a large advertising sign for Builder Bob's Home Improvement Warehouse in Ardmore. The building is noncontributing due to insufficient age.

To the front of the coliseum is a noncontributing sign. The modern sign has a stone base topped by multiple rectangular signs. The bottom sign advertises Blue Bonnet Feeds. Above this is a split sign advertising Pepsi and the Guest Inn. Above this is a digital sign. Topping the sign is one reading "Hardy Murphy Coliseum" with a silhouette of a cowboy.

To the south of the sign is a buffalo statue. To the east of the sign is a flagpole. At the base of the flagpole is the granite marker which previously marked the graves of Hardy Murphy's two show horses. The marker reads on the top "BUCK/GREATEST OF ALL LIBERTY/HIGH SCHOOL HORSES DIED AT/THE AGE OF 34, MARCH 4, 1957" and "SILVER CLOUD/BUCK'S UNDERSTUDY/DIED IN OCTOBER 1959/AT THE AGE OF 34." Below this, the marker reads "BUCK AND SILVER CLOUD WITH THEIR MASTER AND TRAINER, HARDY MURPHY OF/ARDMORE, OKLAHOMA, GAINED NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FAME FOR THEIR/PANTOMIMES OF THE TRAGEDIES OF THE RANGE. THEIR REIGN OF POPULARITY/WAS FROM 1930 TO 1943." All of these objects are noncontributing as well, due to insufficient age.

The large addition to the coliseum has the most impact on the integrity of the Hardy Murphy Coliseum. However, the addition is easily distinguished due to the different building materials and smaller scale. Located on the rear of the building, the addition does not interfere with the overall ability of the building to convey its historic significance. Other alterations to the coliseum include the permanent infill of one historic opening on the north side and seven on the south side, including the creation of a new entry, replacement of the main front entry with double, aluminum, glazed, slab doors and the cloth awnings on the front windows and entry. None of these alterations significantly impact the historic integrity of the building. Overall, the coliseum maintains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to a notable degree.

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SUMMARY

The Hardy Murphy Coliseum is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with Depression-era Works Projects Administration (WPA) in Ardmore. Constructed in 1941-1943 by the WPA, the building was constructed during the waning days of this make-work program. The WPA not only bolstered the local, state and national economies through much of the Great Depression but also contributed a lasting legacy to Oklahoma's built environment. Although the WPA was discontinued in 1943, the period of significance for the coliseum extends to 1949. Shortly before the WPA program was terminated in 1943, the unfinished building was turned over to the sponsor for completion, as allowed under WPA guidelines. Unable to procure the needed materials to complete the building due to war-time restrictions, the city completed what it could and put the building into service. In 1948-1949, the city completed the building by roofing the arena and wiring the exhibition area as intended five years earlier.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Like numerous towns in Oklahoma, Ardmore came into existence as a result of railroad expansion in the late nineteenth century. In 1884, two subsidiaries of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (Santa Fe) Railway Company began building rail lines in Indian and Oklahoma territories. By 1887, the companies were joining their lines to form a north-south line across the Twin Territories with stations scattered along the line. One of these stations, located between the Arbuckle Mountains on the north and the Red River Valley on the south in Pickens County, Indian Territory, was called Ardmore after a railroad official's hometown of Ardmore, Pennsylvania. Trains began their regular runs along the line in late July 1887 and by October of that year, a post office had been formally established at the Ardmore station. The presence of the railroad continued to be a major factor in the economic development and well-being of Ardmore for many years.¹

The town of Ardmore quickly began to take shape with Main Street being laid out in July 1887. Rapidly becoming a center for the surrounding agricultural community, Ardmore experienced few growing pains. Located in the Chickasaw

¹Mac McGalliard, Pioneer Spirit: The Centennial History of Ardmore, The Chronicles of Oklahoma 65 (Spring 1987), 76. See also Arrell Morgan Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries 2nd Ed. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 160.

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Nation of Indian Territory, individual ownership of the land was restricted, even within the city limits. However, Euro-Americans flocked to the area, attracted by the rich farmland and abundant grasslands. In addition to some sharecropping, settlers also leased land from the Chickasaw Nation. One of the primary crops raised in the area was cotton. As such, Ardmore soon gained standing as the largest inland cotton market in the world. From the late 1880s through the first couple of decades of the twentieth century, cotton was a major economic force within the community. Following the collapse of the cotton market in the 1920s, agriculture still remained important to the local economy; however, other cash and livestock crops replaced King Cotton.²

Ardmore also benefitted from another primary Oklahoma industry, oil. In 1905, oil wells were drilled northwest of town. Seven years later, the Healdton Oil Field was discovered in the western part of Carter County. This large field is credited with helping "...Oklahoma achieve national oil leadership..." by 1920. Reportedly, the Healdton wells provided fifty percent of all oil used by the Allied powers during World War I. It is noteworthy that it was during the same decade as the Healdton discovery that Ardmore experienced its greatest population boom of the twentieth century. According to the 1910 census, the community's population was 8,618. By 1920, Ardmore's population had risen to 14,181, an increase of over 5,500 residents. The next largest increase occurred in the 1950s when Ardmore's population went from 17,890 in 1950 to 21,225 by 1960, a change of 3,335 persons.³

In the mid 1920s, United States Highway 77 was constructed from Kansas through to Texas. Importantly, this north-south route linked Oklahoma City and Dallas-Ft. Worth, Texas with Ardmore located at the mid-way point. This was followed

²The History of Carter County (Fort Worth, Texas: University Supply and Equipment Company, 1957), n.p. See also McGalliard, Pioneer Spirit, 77; Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey, Final Survey Report: Architectural/Historic Reconnaissance Level Survey of Certain Parts of the City of Ardmore, (Available at the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: 1993), 93; and, John Dexter, Ardmore Builds and Grows (Available in the Ardmore Vertical File at the Oklahoma Historical Society Research Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: 4 July 1954), n.p.

³Gibson, Oklahoma, 271. See also O.H.P.S., Final Survey Report, 102 and McGalliard, Pioneer Spirit, 84.

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by the completion of the east-west United States Highway 70 through Ardmore. Auspiciously located on two major thoroughfares as automobile travel replaced rail transportation as the dominant means of passenger travel, Ardmore was set to benefit from this significant economic development.⁴

In addition to being an economic center within south central Oklahoma, Ardmore throughout its history has also been a political mainstay. Within three years of the founding of the town, Ardmore was named one of three federal court towns for Indian Territory. At that time, the federal court system in Indian Territory had jurisdiction over all criminal cases except those which carried a sentence of hard labor or death and civil cases if at least one hundred dollars and one U.S. citizen was involved. Increasing the importance of the federal court system, the Curtis Act of 1898 abolished tribal courts and declared Indian law unenforceable in federal court. With the advent of statehood for the Twin Territories in 1907, the United States District Courts replaced the Territorial District Courts but Ardmore remained a federal court town. Statehood also resulted in the naming of Ardmore as county seat of the newly designated Carter County.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Like all Oklahoma communities, Ardmore experienced hard times during the 1930s as the Great Depression devastated economic conditions nationwide. During this period, local factories and three of the five local banks closed, as four of the five oil refineries in Ardmore also shut down. Compounding these local losses was the statewide crisis in both the oil and agricultural industries. Generally by 1940, Ardmore's economy was showing signs of improvement. The city population showed a modest increase, going from 15,741 in 1930 to 16,862 by 1940. While excessive drought and a lack of oil activity continued to retard substantial merchant gain through early 1940, the city itself experienced a \$26,000 cash surplus for the year 1939-1940.⁵

⁴The Daily Ardmoreite, (Ardmore, Oklahoma), 28 July 19??, (Available in the Ardmore Vertical Files, Research Library, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma).

⁵Mac McGalliard, Pioneer Spirit: The Centennial History of Ardmore, The Chronicles of Oklahoma 65 (Spring 1987), 83-84. See also The Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma), 7 January 1940 and 4 June 1940.

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Aiding in the economic recovery of Ardmore were several building projects completed under the auspices of President Roosevelt's New Deal agencies, including the Works Projects Administration (WPA). New Deal-era building projects in Ardmore include the building of Ardmore's National Guard Armory by the WPA in 1936, construction of the Ardmore Municipal Building by the Public Works Administration (PWA) in 1937 and the 1938 construction of Lake Murray State Park on the east edge of Ardmore by the WPA and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). In addition to a soil conservation project in Carter and Johnson County, the WPA also undertook construction of a drainage ditch project on the east side of Ardmore and a new high school gymnasium and office building in late 1940. With the majority of the money being expended on the conservation project, the federal government was boosting the local economy by nearly \$140,000 on these three projects alone.⁶ As in many other communities in Oklahoma, WPA street improvement projects were also on-going in Ardmore during the late 1930s and early 1940s. More visibly, the city, aided by the WPA, initiated an ambitious building program in 1940 that included construction of a new municipal auditorium and a permanent fairgrounds building, an addition to their 1905 Carnegie Library and improvements to the local airport to meet national defense requirements.

The Works Progress Administration originated in May 1935 when the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 replaced the 1933 Federal Emergency Relief Act. Believing that "work rather than direct relief should be the keystone of Federal policy with respect to needy employables," the 1935 act authorized a new program of federal relief employment, building upon earlier New Deal programs such as the Civil Works Authority and the work program run by the Federal Emergency Relief Act. In 1939, the Federal Works Agency incorporated the Works Progress Administration, renaming it the Works Projects Administration. The WPA continued in operation until 1943, at which time the economic stimulus provided by the wartime industries lessened the need for the WPA and the federal monies allocated to the WPA were required elsewhere.⁷

During its eight year existence, the WPA worked on two principal types of projects: service projects and engineering and construction projects. Numerous projects of both categories were undertaken in Oklahoma and Carter County. Service projects employed clerical, technical and professional workers

⁶The Daily Ardmoreite, 2 December 1940.

⁷Final Report on the WPA Program, 1934-1943 (Washington, D.C.:U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), 7.

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of both sexes. Types of programs undertaken by the WPA as service projects included adult education, nursery schools, library services, recreation programs, museum projects, music projects, art programs, writers' projects, theater programs, research and public records projects, sewing projects, school lunch projects, among various other social service projects.⁸

Engineering and construction projects, however, comprised the majority of WPA employment, about seventy-five percent until the spring of 1940. Construction projects were selected on the basis that they provided "useful work to the unemployed at a given time and place," the end result was of functional use to the community and that a sponsor be available. The construction of public utilities, recreation facilities and public buildings account for about a third of all engineering and construction projects. Public utility projects included water and sewer systems and sewage disposal plants. Recreation facility projects primarily consisted of work undertaken on city parks and included construction of numerous swimming and wading pools with related bathhouses across the state. Public building projects involved WPA labor on education and recreation buildings, hospitals, military and naval buildings, prisons and state, county and city government buildings. Nationwide, the WPA constructed and improved numerous airports and airways, city halls, courthouses, libraries, community buildings, municipal and school auditoriums, highways and streets, parks, cemeteries, armories, schools and natural resource conservation facilities as a part of their engineering and construction projects.⁹

The WPA work force was drawn from the unemployed living within the project area. Workers were qualified to work on WPA projects by the local Public Welfare Department, working through the National Reemployment Service. WPA employment was restricted to only one family member, usually the head of the family. Initially, the age requirement for workers was set at sixteen years, however, this was raised to a minimum of eighteen years in 1938. Although there was not a maximum age limit, agencies generally did not hire persons over sixty-five years of age due to their eligibility for Social Security. Congress made no restriction on the employment of non-US citizens during the first year of the WPA's existence. Following several acts which progressively restricted the employment of aliens by the WPA, in 1939, Congress prohibited the employment of aliens on WPA projects and each worker was required to sign an

⁸Ibid., 59-71.

⁹Ibid., 47-48, 50-52.

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affidavit affirming their US citizenship. A hiring preference was not instituted until the ERA Act of 1937 which gave preference to the employment of veterans, which was reinforced in 1941 with the added requirement that the spouse of unemployed veterans and unmarried widows of veterans be given the same preference as veterans. Due to conflicting reasoning, preferential employment based on need was not instituted until 1939. At that time, the WPA established two types of needs: those with no income and those with insufficient income to exist at a subsistence level.¹⁰

The WPA paid a flat "security wage," which was slightly higher than direct relief payments but lower than comparable private employment pay. By 1937, the average pay in Oklahoma was thirty-six dollars a month for unskilled labor. Skilled and semi-skilled workers received higher wages depending on the skill required and the experience of the workman. During its first four years, the WPA offered continuous employment as available within the region. Subsequently, the WPA enforced an eighteen month ceiling on employment. However, the worker was eligible for reemployment after thirty days and a recertification of need.¹¹

WPA projects were designed to maximize the number of laborers and the length of employment. Thus, the maximum amount of relief was obtained through every project. To facilitate this goal, WPA workers labored continuously on every aspect of the project from clearing the site to manufacturing furnishings. In Oklahoma, the use of native stone for WPA buildings kept project costs low and employed many quarrying and dressing the stone for use. Other materials necessary, such as wood bracing and roof material, were usually obtained locally so as to stimulate the local economy as much as possible.

Although a federal work program, the WPA only facilitated public works projects nationwide. The WPA did not initiate or undertake projects by itself. WPA guidelines required that a "tax-supported public body" sponsor the project which had to result in a permanent and useful addition to the community. The sponsors could be federal, state or local agencies. The majority of projects were developed by county, city, town and village governments and agencies. The project sponsor provided partial monetary support, usually in the form of land and materials, as well as engineering and architectural plans and

¹⁰Ibid., 17-21.

¹¹Ibid., 21. See also The Farmers Weekly Stroud (Oklahoma) Democrat, 19 February 1937.

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specifications. The WPA had no fixed percentage of the project cost which the individual sponsor was required to pay. On the average, the cost to the sponsoring agency fluctuated between twenty and thirty percent of the total cost. Notably, the sponsor completed the project if the WPA was unable to and maintained and operated the finished project. Ownership of the project belonged to the sponsor upon completion.¹²

The WPA handled the administration of the project and provided the majority of funds to meet wages. WPA regulations capped federal funds for any one project at about \$52,000 to avoid competition with other Depression era programs, especially the Public Works Administration (PWA). Another New Deal public works program, the PWA did not concern itself primarily with aiding the jobless as the WPA did; rather, the PWA's goal was to stimulate business. In order to circumvent this monetary restriction, WPA projects often received several rounds of funding under the guise of additions to the original project. Other projects, for a variety of reasons, also exceeded the WPA allowance.¹³

In August 1940, an advisory committee of 25 leading Ardmore citizens scheduled a meeting with the city commissioners to "...launch a program to build a new convention hall and additional permanent buildings at the county fairgrounds." These amenities were to enhance the available facilities in Ardmore to attract larger conventions and events, which in turn would boost the local economy. By October, the proposed plan had grown to include \$25,000 (later \$15,000) for fire equipment, \$20,000 to enlarge and improve the Ardmore airport and \$5,000 to erect an extension on the library building. All but the fire equipment bond called for participation by the WPA which would almost double the total value of the projects to \$200,000. The city scheduled a special election for November 26, 1940, to vote on the five bond issues.

The proposed fair building was to cost tax payers \$30,000. The building would be large enough to include all fair exhibits, except for the livestock exhibits. The building was "Copied after a building at Chickasha..." and would measure 138 feet wide, 25 feet long with 12 foot walls except for the center two-story section. The second floor of the center section was to house nine

¹² Questions and Answers on the WPA, (Available in the Vertical Files, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: December 1939), 6-7, 16. See also Final Report, 9-10.

¹³ Final Report, 9-10. See also Questions and Answers, 10-12.

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offices to accommodate the county agent, home demonstration agent, the AAA and other district agricultural agencies. It was estimated that 2000 cubic yards of stone would be needed for the project. Importantly, it was the use of stone which made it a better WPA project than the convention hall project proposed for in the same bond issue. Due to the heavier work load to quarry, prepare and lay the native stone, the fair building project was deemed a "...better deal..." for both the city and the WPA. The city had only to provide \$30,000 of the estimated nearly \$100,000 cost of the project.¹⁴

Cold weather cast a pall over the bond issue election with early reports noting that at mid-day less than 200 votes had been cast. By the end of day, more than a 1,000 voters exercised their right and all bond issues were passed with more than fifty percent of the total votes in favor. Of the five bond projects, the new fairgrounds building ranked fifth with 595 voting in favor and 426 opposed, leaving a majority of 169. In contrast, the new fire equipment garnered a much larger majority of 686 with 862 supporting the bond and only 176 opposed. It was expected that the County Election Board would quickly certify the vote so the city could begin advertising the bonds by Friday of the same week. Moving rapidly, it was anticipated that the bids would be opened by 12 December 1940 and the money for the projects would be in-hand by mid-January 1941. However, much work remained to be done in finishing the plans and specifications for the two larger construction projects and, importantly, making an application to the WPA.¹⁵

The need to "...have all specifications and details whipped through in record time..." was largely due to the uncertain future of the WPA. Increasing war-related activities were eroding the demand and available funding for the make-work program. Within two weeks of the election, the city commissioners engaged the services of J.B. White, local architect, and his son, Ben, to prepare the design and specifications for the auditorium, fair grounds building and library addition. Although a contract was not signed at that time, it was "...understood..." that the Whites would be given the work.¹⁶

The following week, the selling of the bonds for the Ardmore projects established a new state record for low interest rates for municipal bonds. At

¹⁴The Daily Ardmoreite, (Ardmore, Oklahoma), 24 November 1940.

¹⁵Ibid., 26 November 1940 and 27 November 1940.

¹⁶Ibid., 6 December 1940.

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a rate of 1.73, the bonds for the fairgrounds building and municipal auditorium were sold to Fenner-Beane of Oklahoma City. Following preparation of transcripts of the sale and printing of the bonds, the matter would then be submitted to the Attorney General for approval. A required thirty-day protest period would then have to elapse before the bonds were delivered to the buyers and the money available to the city. Before construction activity could begin, the city still had to receive WPA approval of the projects to complete the funding.¹⁷

By mid-January 1941, the city had decided to locate the new fair building on the site of then-existing softball diamond and racetrack. The softball field would be moved to the east and the "old" racetrack grandstand, which was deemed unsafe for public use, would be demolished. Entrance to the fairgrounds would be through the new building. The location was chosen to allow more room for a midway and other activities in vicinity of the new building. Additionally, the new location was believed to "...be in a better position from an artistic and utilitarian standpoint...". Another important consideration was that by placing the new building on the softball diamond, the 1941 fair could still be held as the existing buildings would be undisturbed by the construction activities.¹⁸

The plans and specifications for the fairground building were submitted to the state WPA office by mid-February 1941. The fairgrounds project was approved fairly quickly at the national-level of the WPA in late February 1941. However, by mid-March 1941, the district WPA administrator, Charles Tompkins, announced that due to the WPA projects going on in Ardmore at that time, the fair grounds building would be delayed, along with the Convention Hall project. Nearly 250 men were working on three projects in Ardmore, including the drainage ditch, street improvements and construction of the high school gym and office. These projects were estimated to absorb all available WPA labor through at least July. With decreasing resources available nationwide for the WPA program, the city was urged to consider choosing one building project to start with.¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid., 13 December 1940.

¹⁸Ibid., 14 January 1941.

¹⁹Ibid., 18 February 1941, 27 February 1941, 21 March 1941, 7 April 1941 and 5 June 1941.

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Although the city commissioners voted in favor of starting the convention hall project first in late June 1941, the fairground building project continued to steadily moved forward. In late July 1941, workmen at the fairgrounds began making preparations for the opening of the Southern Oklahoma Fair and Exposition to be held in late August 1941. From newspaper accounts, this apparently included demolition of the old grandstand at the race track.²⁰

In a somewhat unexpected turn of events, on 1 August 1941, Clarence Harris, Ardmore city manager, announced that the work orders for both the auditorium and fairgrounds building were on hand with a 7 August 1941 start date for both projects. Within days, the Ardmore WPA office issued work orders to 170 men; 60 men were instructed to begin demolition of Convention Hall and 110 men were sent to dismantle the old racetrack grandstand and begin preparation of the fairground building's foundation. True to the WPA's maximization of resources, the workmen were instructed to "...salvage every possible bit of material that can be saved" from the Convention Hall and the lumber from the grandstand was to be used as form material for the fairground building's foundation. As planned, the WPA moved tools and equipment to the fairground's site on 7 August 1941 with workmen beginning work that day.²¹

Work on both buildings progressed nicely through early September 1941. At that time, an unanimous agreement between the city commissioners and the citizens committee called for a major change in the fairground building. The two groups desired an expansive indoor coliseum which would be "...large enough to seat thousands of persons and at the same time offer floor space for rodeos, livestock shows, indoor circuses, community meetings and other enterprises." Motivating the desire for the arena was the selection of Ardmore by Gene Autry as home to his "Flying-A-Rodeo Ranch." In order to save the exhibition space in the building under construction, the groups proposed a "...re-designing (of) the interior floor plans to coincide with the addition of the annex." By the end of September 1941, the city commissioners approved the coliseum plan proposed by J.B. White and Son of Ardmore.²²

²⁰Ibid., 31 July 1941.

²¹Ibid., 9 July 1941, 1 August 1941, 5 August 1941 and 7 August 1941.

²²Ibid., 3 September 1941, 11 September 1941, 14 September 1941, 24 September 1941, 26 September 1941, 5 October 1941.

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At about the same time, the opening of bids for some materials and work on both the fairgrounds building and convention hall revealed that actual construction costs were running ten to twenty percent higher than the original estimates. By the first of October 1941, the citizens of Ardmore were again asked to vote for a bond issue to complete the city building program. Increased material costs due to war-time demands were blamed for a shortfall of \$22,000 for the auditorium and \$12,000 for the fairgrounds building. Additionally, \$58,000 for the construction of the large indoor arena at the fairgrounds was included. With less than one thousand citizens casting a vote, the new bond issue passed with a majority of 154 votes for the auditorium and just 22 on the fairgrounds project. Moving quickly, the bonds were sold by the end of October 1941.²³

Interestingly, at the same time as the case for the bond issue was being pleaded in the local newspaper, the national Supply Priorities and Allocation Board (SPAB) issued a "...sweeping policy decree...forbidding the start of any public or private construction which would use critical materials essential to the nation's defense or to the public health and safety." The decree applied to flood control projects, office buildings, post offices, hotels, highways and even residential construction. Using its "priority power," the SPAB could even block public works projects approved by Congress. Notably, the SPAB also announced that "In cases where construction has started and is substantially completed,...., efforts will be made to get the critical materials needed to finish the job." Aware of the possible shortage, city officials made tentative arrangements with the J.B. Klein Iron and Foundry Company of Oklahoma City to acquire the steel needed for the arena prior to the bond election. Representatives of the ironworks company were quoted in the local paper, assuring that "...the steel Ardmore will need for the arena will be available."²⁴

By mid-November 1941, about the time the nearby town of Berwyn changed its name to Gene Autry, it was estimated that "Work should be completed on this big job sometime before next fall if no obstacles arise or complications develop." Towards the end of the month, the formal application for the arena project was submitted to the WPA. WPA officials, particularly Charles Tompkins, previously assured the city of the WPA's cooperation in expanding the fairgrounds

²³Ibid., 9 September 1941, 1 October 1941, 2 October 1941, 12 October 1941, 13 October 1941, 15 October 1941, 16 October 1941 and 30 October 1941.

²⁴Ibid., 9 October 1941 and 10 October 1941.

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building.²⁵

Within weeks, the city commissioners signed a contract with Capital Steel Company of Oklahoma City for the steel needed for the arena. Like the Klein Ironworks and Foundry, Capital Steel had sufficient steel on-hand to fulfill the arena requirements. The newspaper, however, noted that this was "...subject, of course, to the possibility the government might call it in." District WPA Supervisor Tompkins was also present at the contract signing. Although the WPA had not yet formally approved the project, Tompkins indicated that there should be no problems with the project except for the possibility that war-time demands may be "upsetting" to it. By that time, work on the fairgrounds building had been shut down as the project had progressed as far as possible until the arena was approved.²⁶

By mid-January 1942, the coliseum project received WPA approval. With local funds from the bond issue in the bank and much material waiting for the workmen, local officials were elated the project was approved despite the shifting trends brought on by the war. In early February 1942, the local newspaper announced that work on the coliseum would resume on 9 February 1942 with Grant Carpenter as Stone Superintendent.²⁷

Throughout 1942, the WPA program itself was reduced and increasing pressure brought to bear on non-defense related projects. In mid-June 1942, Charles Tompkins was let go in "...the biggest slash that the Oklahoma WPA has felt in its history." Notably, both the convention hall and coliseum project "...were pet projects with Tompkins and he has made many trips to Ardmore on his own time to further these jobs." Three days later, Ron Stephens, state WPA administrator, announced that 9,000 WPA workers would be out of work by the end of July with projects being discontinued in twenty counties. At the end of November 1942, Stephens also notified the city of Ardmore that WPA work on the coliseum would end on 30 January 1943. Stephens warned that "At that time, regardless of the status of the job, materials not incorporated into the structure will be removed and what WPA workers may be on the job will be withdrawn." WPA officials had determined that the building could be completed to a point by that date that it would be a usable facility, all that was

²⁵Ibid., 16 November 1941 and 25 November 1941.

²⁶Ibid., 16 December 1941.

²⁷Ibid., 14 January 1942, 2 February 1942.

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required under WPA regulations.²⁸

Days later in December 1942, President Roosevelt ordered the liquidation of the WPA as work relief was no longer deemed necessary. Projects which were not federally-sponsored were to be closed out by completing "...useful units..." and/or by turning the project over to the sponsor for completion. The WPA was to shut down by 1 February 1943 in order to divert all possible funding to defense-related programs.²⁹

Quicker than originally expected, the WPA pulled its workers off the coliseum project. The WPA work period on the fairgrounds project officially ended on 23 December 1942 but supervisors agreed to stay on until the end of the year. In exchange for the WPA agreeing to leaving what materials were on-site, the city agreed to provide the labor to continue work on the project. By the end of January 1943, the bleachers in the arena section of the "...mammoth fair grounds exhibition building..." were nearing completion. Inclement weather delayed sidewalk construction and the grading and leveling of the grounds, but the work was not anticipated to take long. Due to war-time shortages, the arena remained unroofed and the exhibition portion of the building did not have electrical wiring. Both of these projects were anticipated to be delayed until the end of the war. Despite this, a few days of good weather were all that was deemed necessary to "...put the big building in condition for use by the public."³⁰

Five years after the initial project closed, the city initiated another bond project to finish the coliseum as originally intended. Plans for completion of the coliseum were underway by mid-April 1948. Within a month, it was announced that bids for the project would be considered at the 1 June 1948 meeting of the city commissioners. At that time, with the bid of \$130,684, the Burton-Miller Construction Company of Ardmore received the contract to complete the building. A week later, a contract was let for six auxiliary buildings at the fairgrounds "...to supplement the main exhibition building in accommodating fairs and

²⁸Ibid., 18 June 1942, 21 June 1942, 25 November 1942.

²⁹Ibid., 4 December 1942.

³⁰Ibid., 16 December 1942 and 31 January 1943.

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livestock exhibitions."³¹

By mid-July 1948, work was "...well underway..." on the arena roofing job. The contractor, Clyde Burton, was unwilling to predict exactly when the project would be finished; however, he indicated that it would not be in time for the 1948 fair in September. Although work on the roof was hampered by "...critical steel shortages and other difficulties..." the exhibition portion of the building had been wired and put into condition for the September fair. The steel shortage was also holding up erection of the auxiliary buildings at the fairgrounds.³²

One week after the 1948 fair opened in mid-September, the first carload of steel for the arena roof arrived in Ardmore. This carload, however, was not enough to start construction on the roofing as it only contained the steel joists for the giant roof. Anticipation soared in mid-October 1948, when the steel company notified city officials that the structural steel for the roof would be delivered within a week. Days later, "Gloom spread over the bright hopes of city officials to complete the fair park building this year..." as it became known that the necessary deck steel would be unavailable until after 1 January 1949.³³

At the end of January 1949, the deck steel was finally enroute from the mills with expected delivery within the week. Burton estimated a completion day for the project by the end of February 1949, in time for the spring livestock show. Without any further delays, the March 1949 spring livestock show was held in the completed building, becoming "...the first event to appear under the new roof of the giant pavilion arena."³⁴

Official opening and dedication of the building, however, did not occur at that time. As long-anticipated by city officials, just days after the coliseum opened in March 1949, a five year contract was signed with representatives of

³¹Ibid., 16 April 1948, 18 May 1948, 1 June 1948, 2 June 1948 and 9 June 1948.

³²Ibid., 18 July 1948, 10 August 1948

³³Ibid., 21 September 1948, 11 October 1948, 19 October 1948, and 21 October 1948.

³⁴Ibid., 26 January 1949 and 7 March 1949.

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Gene Autry's World Renowned Madison Square Garden Rodeo. The rodeo would appear nightly for four of the five nights of the annual Carter County Fair in September. Climaxing the first year the fair was held in the completed arena, the fair building was dedicated on the last day of the fair and rodeo. At that time, the building was named the Gene Autry Coliseum with the famed movie, radio and recording artist present for the ceremonies.³⁵

Through the early 1950s, the coliseum continued to be known as Gene Autry Coliseum. By about 1957, the building was simply called the fairgrounds coliseum. After this but before 1961, the building was renamed in honor of local cowboy Hardy Murphy. Murphy was a world renowned rodeo entertainer from Ardmore. A local here, Murphy sponsored the annual Ardmore Birthday Celebration for over three decades. Murphy passed away in 1961 at the age of 58. Buck and Silver Cloud, his horses, are buried to the northwest of the coliseum.³⁶ As the coliseum was generically referred to during the period of significance, the name that has been associated with the building the longest, Hardy Murphy Coliseum, is used for the nomination purposes.

The Hardy Murphy Coliseum is historically significant for its association with the WPA, a critical component of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal-era program. Nationally from its inauguration in 1935 to its termination in 1943, the WPA expended more than 10.75 billion dollars on a diversity of projects. An additional 2.8 billion dollars was provided by various sponsors on WPA projects. Almost eighty-nine percent of the WPA expenditure was used for wages, with seventeen percent of the sponsors' funds spent on labor costs. Approximately 8.5 million individuals nationwide benefitted from WPA employment at one time or another. At the peak of WPA employment in Oklahoma, January 1936, 94,821 persons were toiling on approved projects. By March 1937, 2,971 projects had been approved with 2,581 of those projects being undertaken by the WPA. At the end of the program in 1943, Oklahoma had received over 185 million dollars from the WPA for a multitude of projects statewide. Sponsors statewide expended almost another sixty million dollars. Combined, the Oklahoma economy was boosted by over 232 million dollars in eight years. The projects represent an investment of more than 415 million hours of manpower earning a total of over 140 million dollars in wages for the state of Oklahoma.³⁷

³⁵Ibid., 11 March 1949 and 11 September 1949.

³⁶The Daily Oklahoman, 7 March 1957 and 27 October 1961.

³⁷Final Report, 101, 115, and 124.

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The infusion of this much-needed work and money into hard pressed communities relieved the pressure of the unemployed on local, state and national economies. The WPA undertook a number of projects in Ardmore and Carter County, over seven projects with a value of nearly \$350,000 being in various stages in 1940-1941 alone. The buildings constructed by the WPA, such as the Hardy Murphy Coliseum, remain as architectural testimony to the social ills and remedies of the 1930s and early 1940s. These buildings represent the local and national efforts to resist the debilitating effects of the worst depression in American history with a certain fortitude and style.

That the building was not completed until 1949 is an important footnote to the history of the WPA. The plans followed in the completion of the coliseum were in place when the WPA turned the project over to the city. The finished building matches the original conception of the building by architect J.B. White and Son. The city's inability to procure the needed materials due to the critical demands of defense-related industries and activities was largely responsible for stopping completion of the building in 1943. Labor issues may also have been a factor as the American workforce shifted gears from make-work to defense work. Nonetheless, even three years after World War II ended, the city encountered great delay in obtaining the steel needed for the giant arena roof.

Notably, the WPA had long reserved the right to withdraw from a project when necessary. While it is unknown how many projects were left unfinished in Oklahoma, the Hardy Murphy Coliseum is an outstanding example of the value of the WPA projects to the local community. Despite all the hurdles, the city endeavored to complete the Depression-era project during the booming post-war years. That the building was only completed and not modified is confirmation of the quality and usefulness of the work of the WPA to the city. As required by the federal guidelines, all WPA projects were to result in a "permanent and useful addition" to the community. The Hardy Murphy Coliseum exemplifies this requirement. The coliseum was deemed necessary by the community to enhance available facilities to attract larger rodeos, particularly Gene Autry's famed show, and other large events. Learning from their pre-depression mistakes, Ardmore was diversifying its economic base with amenities that would not only serve residents but also aid the Ardmore economy by bringing non-residents to the community. The coliseum has proven a useful addition to the city as it continues to function as originally intended.

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Hardy Murphy Coliseum
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the intersection of South Lake Murray Drive and the drive to the south of the coliseum, proceed north for 487 feet, then turn east and go 78 feet, then turn south and go 45 feet, then turn east and go 20 feet, then turn north and go 45 feet, then turn east and go 870 feet to the chainlink fence on the east side of the coliseum, then turn south and go 487 feet, then turn west and go 968 feet to the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary forms a rectangle around the coliseum and includes only the property immediately associated with the building. The west boundary is South Lake Murray Drive, the street in front of the building. The north boundary is the chainlink fence along the north side of the building. The north boundary excludes the 1915 locomotive and horses graves to the northwest of the coliseum building. Located together in a separately fenced area, neither contribute to the historic significance of the coliseum. The east boundary is the chainlink fence which runs along the back of the fairground property. The south boundary is roughly the road along the south side of the building. The buildings to the southeast of the coliseum are excluded as they also do not contribute to the historic significance of the building, not being present during the period of significance.