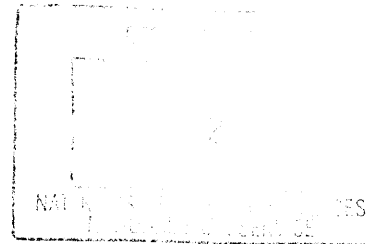


NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. Name of Property

historic name Broken Arrow Elementary/Junior High School

other names/site number Broken Arrow Junior High School, Broken Arrow Central Middle School

2. Location

street & number 210 North Main not for publication ___
city or town Broken Arrow vicinity ___
state Oklahoma code OK county Tulsa code 143 zip code 74012

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Bob Schuber

1-21-03

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 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

 other (explain):

Edouard H. Beall

3/7/03

 Signature of Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 5 </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 5 </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: EDUCATION Sub: School -

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: EDUCATION Sub: school -

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:

Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation **CONCRETE**

Roof **ASPHALT**

Walls **BRICK**

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)

Education

Period of Significance 1926-1953

Significant Dates 1926, 1930, 1944, 1946, 1952

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Love, Albert I., and Co., architect

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: Broken Arrow Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than five acres

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>248580E</u>	<u>3993448N</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </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 Michael Cassity

organization Michael Cassity Historical Research and Photography date December 3, 2002

street & number 304 West Albuquerque telephone 918 451-8378

city or town Broken Arrow state OK zip code 74011

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 Broken Arrow Public Schools

street & number 601 South Main telephone 918 259-4300

city or town Broken Arrow state OK zip code 74012

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

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Broken Arrow Elementary School

Tulsa County, Oklahoma

Description

SUMMARY

One of the most impressive buildings in Broken Arrow, this stately school reflects grand vision in its design and attention to detail in its construction. A beautiful study in symmetry with a Mission / Spanish Colonial Revival design, the school is two-story in its central element, with one story wings that extend to the north and south, and flat roofs throughout and a basement in parts. The dark red brick is accented by light mortar, light stone inlays, and metal mansard roof projections that resemble American Spanish red clay tile. Originally the school was a simple T-shape with the long east elevation of the building dominating the appearance while an auditorium extended from the center to the west, behind the main building. Subsequent additions have altered the configuration by extending west the north and south wings of the building so that the configuration now is more of an E shape, although the front (east) elevation has not changed at all. Careful maintenance has preserved its appearance and a sensitivity to original design and materials has assured that most additions, as the city and school have grown, have not compromised the integrity of the structure. Thus the building, with the exceptions noted below, possesses a high degree of integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

East Elevation

The east elevation reveals most clearly the Mission / Spanish Colonial Revival style and is divided into three parts. Slightly inset from the plane of the two flanking wings, the two-story center itself is also divided into three symmetrical parts. The center portion projects slightly and from that plane, the covered entrance projects farther. The entrance, an imposing feature, is within a portico with a tripled, round-arched entry supported by square brick columns bordered with rectangular light-colored stone that rises to define the three arches; indeed, the arches are *faux* and ornamental only since the rounded summits of the entries have been filled with brick. The projecting portico is surrounded on its three exposed sides with metal resembling an American Spanish red clay tile mansard roof, supported on each elevation by paired eave braces. Brick parapets bordered with

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Broken Arrow Elementary School

Tulsa County, Oklahoma

rectangular stone rise at the two corners above the mansard roof while dark red tile crowns the cornice. The words "CENTRAL MIDDLE SCHOOL" in buff metal are centered in and project from the brick immediately above the east mansard roof. Above the portico a centered window bay includes three modern windows. With muted metal hardware and configured to adapt to the design of the building without altering the structure, these—and other windows in the building—have not changed the appearance of the structure. The windows are custom designed with three ostensible lights each. The bottom two lights are metal single hung windows; above those lights, however, a third panel that appears to be a separate light, upon closer examination is an opaque material that blends with the reflective surface of the window lights. This material covers the portion of the window that is now above the dropped ceilings inside. The soldier course brick lintels and the stone windowsills at each window remain unscathed by the replacement of older windows with more energy-efficient modern materials. Above this lintel, a stone tablet of the same width as the lintel is engraved with the name "BROKEN ARROW PUBLIC SCHOOL," a subtle testimony to the prominence of the building in the community and the broad focus it held. As if to crown an already elaborate entrance, the wide Mission San Luis Rey de Franca parapet includes a conspicuous quatrefoil stone cutout in its center that has been filled with light mortar. Consistent with other trim in the building, the parapet is corniced with light stone, shaped to provide curves and corners for the parapet. On either side of the entrance, still within the two-story central part of the elevation, single-hung dull metal windows provide illumination for the classrooms inside on both upper and lower levels, a single window nearest the center and double windows to the outside. An additional metal tile mansard roof projects east over the three windows on the north and an identical mansard projects over the windows on the south; in each instance the paired eave braces, the lintels, and the sills are identical. Moreover, at the top corners of this larger central section, secondary parapets emphasize the unity and separate nature of this section by setting it apart from the rest of the façade. These parapets are formed with three rectangular blocks of stone arranged so that the peaks are blunted with a short horizontal crown member; in other instances the peaks are sharp, formed by two blocks leaning against each other.

The north and south elevations of the second story of the middle section, which rise above the single-story wings on the north and south, are symmetrical and identical. Twin sets of three windows in two openings with lintels and sills consistent with others in the building

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Broken Arrow Elementary School

Tulsa County, Oklahoma

open from classrooms onto the flat roofs of the adjacent building sections to the north and south. The mansard roof above the windows on the east elevation wraps around the north and south corners slightly and the angular parapets at the northeast and southeast corners are repeated immediately so as to form a single, double-peaked parapet at those corners. The northwest and southwest corners, however, which are to the rear of the building, lack parapets.

In contrast to the elaborate central portion of the east elevation, the single story wings reaching north and south, and enclosing classrooms, feature simple designs, yet remain consistent and unified with the whole elevation. Once again, however, symmetry and subtlety characterize the exterior appearance. Projecting forward to the east, each wing is divided into three parts, the segments identified by massive window groupings separated by brick walls capped with parapets and decorative brick panels above each group of windows. The center of each of these wings holds a series of five windows with two pairs flanking a single window (two-one-two), the three sets divided by brick mullions. Above the windows, parallel soldier courses of brick on top and bottom form three panels with light stone blocks at each corner, thus repeating the borders of the windows and emphasizing the horizontal lines of the wings. On each side of this central section of the wings, though, parapets crowned with two angled pieces of stone cap the solid brick dividing the sections. An interesting feature, not found in the center of this elevation, is the addition of a vertical arch with stone sill beneath each parapet. While there is some speculation that these arches may have originally opened onto the flat roof, the earliest photographs of the school appear to show that they were filled with mortar from the beginning; the photos, however are not definitive. The arches are then flanked by vertical stone blocks the same height as the brick panels above the windows. Directly beneath the arch, though, two small vertical arched clerestories with lintels at the same level as the other lintels strengthen the division of the sections of the elevation. (A close look at the clerestories reveals the dropped ceilings of the interiors.) The flanking sections of the wings—those adjacent to the entrance and those farthest from the center—simplify the design even more; the five windows are grouped together with a common lintel and common sill and the brick panel above is a single panel running the width of the lintel below. Since the land on which the school is located slopes to the west and slightly to the north, the white concrete foundation becomes increasingly pronounced from south to north.

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Broken Arrow Elementary School
Tulsa County, Oklahoma

Two cornerstones maintain the symmetry at southeast and northeast corners on the east elevation. The cornerstone at the southeast corner commemorates the members of the Board of Education 1904-1925 as well as the architect and contractor for the 1925 building, while the northeast cornerstone was placed by the local lodge of the Masonic order, also in 1925.

Not attached to the building, but a functioning and symbolic feature that provided connection with its pre-1925 predecessor, the school bell that once hung in the belfry of the 1904-1925 building is now mounted on a metal tubular frame near the southeast corner. For years this bell, at this location, served not only the school by summoning students to school, but also the community with its loud peal from the center of town announcing the beginning of the workday.

South Elevation

The south elevation is divided into three sections; the section on the west (the cafeteria) being a non-contributing element. Each of the other two contains two parts, each following the same general pattern characteristic of the wings on the east elevation, although with some variation. The easternmost section includes a small, single-door entrance dividing that section in half; to the east of the entrance, instead of a group of windows, a brick panel formed by soldier coursed bricks on the sides and stretcher coursed bricks at top and bottom and with square stone blocks at each corner is of the same dimensions as the windows in counterpart sections. The consistency of the pattern, moreover, is affirmed by a similar panel above it that is identical to those above the windows in other sections. Indeed, the symmetry is sufficient that this part of the elevation appears very much congruous with that west of the south entrance, a section that includes a cluster of five windows above a single sill. A small metallic tile mansard roof, with paired eave braces, extends over the stoop at the single door entrance. A modern utilitarian flat roof canopy, with two pairs of metal supports has been attached to the building above the entrance and below the mansard roof to provide weather protection for the walkway leading from this entrance to the street; that attachment is not contributing. The combination of pointed and blunted parapets likewise continues, with the blunted parapets at the corners and the pointed parapet centered above the entrance. Set into the ground at the east corner of the

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Broken Arrow Elementary School

Tulsa County, Oklahoma

south elevation, and thus beneath the south surface of the 1925 school board cornerstone, the original stone tablet from the 1904 structure is much worn, but the words PUBLIC SCHOOL are still discernible.

This section was part of the original 1925 building, but west of it, and added to it, the 1952 addition begins. The 1952 enlargement of the building on the southwest corner essentially doubled that part of the school by adding four elementary classrooms, but it remained consistent with the original structure and design. Butted against the west elevation of the original section, the seam is noticeable, but not distracting for the exact design and a near-matching brick lot maintains the integrity of appearance. In fact, the section west of the original adheres almost exactly to the design of the original on the east elevation. The parapets continue, the windows are grouped in clusters over a common sill, the lintels are the same soldier coursed bricks, and the panels above the windows are the same as those over the other windows. The only deviation from the original design is that the window openings are slightly wider, including in each group six windows instead of five.

The western half of the south elevation is non-contributing and consists of a cafeteria added after the period of historic significance. While the cafeteria is also constructed of red brick, it lacks any of the stylistic features characteristic of the original building. At the same time, the cafeteria is low and almost completely obscured from view from the main (east) elevation and thus does not impact the original building.

North Elevation

The original portion of the north elevation mirrors exactly its counterpart on the south, including the absence of windows in the section nearest the front of the building, the single-door entrance with metallic tile roof, and the group of five windows west of the entrance. The noncontributing canopy extending over the walkway on the south, of course, is not duplicated on the north. West of that original part, though, is a part of the building added in the 1930. A single story addition with basement, this section of the building, including at the time a principal's office and two classrooms, deviates slightly from the original structure in that the parapets and windows are arranged so as to divide the elevation into three asymmetrical parts, that nearest the original structure on the east being larger than the

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Broken Arrow Elementary School

Tulsa County, Oklahoma

other two. While the materials, style, and workmanship in the east (adjoining) section of this addition match the original, that section contains two windows paired together and a smaller window adjacent to the original building. The remainder of this elevation, the two sections west, contains two sets of three windows divided by a brick mullion.

West Elevation

In the original configuration of the building, the east elevation represented the long horizontal cross bar of a T shape, with classrooms extending in a line along the front of the building. The auditorium /gymnasium reached back, to the west, forming the vertical perpendicular making the building a T. The addition of classrooms on the northwest in 1930 and also the addition of classrooms on the southwest in 1952 altered the layout to an E shape. Thus the west elevation, the rear of the building, is irregular with three separate wings projecting. On the south, the cafeteria, a non-contributing feature, forms one part. East of the cafeteria, in the 1952 addition, the north elevation of the wing includes one set of six windows and one set of four. The stone sills and the brick lintels match those on the other elevations. There are no parapets.

In the middle of the west elevation, the auditorium and gymnasium, constructed in 1946, retains its original appearance with a massive two-story elevation broken by three sets of paired windows; while the sills match those on other parts of the structure, the lintels are absent. Beneath those windows, a covered walkway extending along this elevation from north to south connects this section to the cafeteria.

On the north, the 1930 classroom addition forms the third arm of the E. The west elevation of that section includes no windows or ornamentation and one entry—a centered double-door that opens onto a staired porch—forms the only break in the plane.

In addition to the three wings of the building projecting to the west, a series of five modular expansion units used as additional classrooms, have been located on the school grounds west of the original building. These units are non-contributing features and are not connected to the original structure except by walkways.

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Broken Arrow Elementary School
Tulsa County, Oklahoma

Interior

The interior of the school building has from time to time been remodeled. Ceilings have been dropped, new rooms added, and lighting changed. The only clues to the changes from the outside are the occasional glimpses of the dropped ceilings at midpoint in the clerestories. The main windows in each elevation are sufficiently tall that they too would reveal the space above the dropped ceilings were it not for the fact that in each instance the top panel of the windows consists of a dull brown opaque material that makes it resemble a third light in the windows. Thus the essentials of the original appearance are preserved from the exterior despite the remodeling inside. A careful examination of the interior reveals, especially in closets and other storage spaces, portions of the original stamped tin ceiling, the original boiler room (with apparently the 1946 replacement boiler intact), and several charred structural members that serve as permanent marks from the 1944 fire in the central section.

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Broken Arrow Elementary School

Tulsa County, Oklahoma

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

Broken Arrow Elementary School, now known as Broken Arrow Central Middle School, is eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A because of its association with the development of education in this community. Designed by noted Tulsa architect A. J. Love, who created a number of school buildings in the area, and constructed in 1925, Broken Arrow Elementary School opened in April 1926 as the only elementary school in the community. During the period of its historic significance the fundamental structure of the curriculum changed to create a new junior high school program, and this building was altered to accommodate that development by providing for the separation of students of junior high school age. When part of the original school building was destroyed by fire during World War II, the original building architect planned and directed its replacement (and also its expansion after the war). And when American schools began to feel the impact of the post-war Baby Boom, this school again expanded to absorb the dramatic surge in enrollments. At each step of the way, the school, in both operation and facilities, reflected fundamental contours of the broad patterns of history in the nation at the local level.

Historical Background

The origins of the community of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma reach well into the nineteenth century, although the modern community is itself distinctly a twentieth-century development. After the Creek, or Muscogee, Indians were forced to leave their native Alabama and Georgia in the late 1820s, they clustered for defense and mutual aid in their new home in Indian Territory along the Arkansas River around the confluence of the Verdigris River. By 1834, when a military post was established higher up the Arkansas, where the Cimarron River joined the larger stream, these people felt more secure from some of their enemies and began to expand their settlements upstream.¹ In 1834 one group,

¹ Grant Foreman, *The Five Civilized Tribes* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press,

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Broken Arrow Elementary School

Tulsa County, Oklahoma

the Broken Arrow (Thlikachka) Creeks, settled near the point where the road from Fort Arbuckle to Fort Gibson intersected the Big Osage Hunting and War Trail. Over the next half century the dispersed farming community of Broken Arrow grew notwithstanding the severe circumstances of tensions with other tribes, inadequate assistance from the government despite treaty assurances of support, pressures for cultural erosion from missionaries, division of the tribe during the Civil War, and flight and ruin of their community during that war. Yet the community developed schools, churches, and farms and trading establishments.² In the years following the war, the development increased but so too did the infiltration of whites into the area, even though they were legally prohibited. Ranchers, traders, and others, sometimes legally and sometimes otherwise, increased in number, the ranches expanded in size, and coal began to be mined in large quantities nearby, but the Broken Arrow area remained predominately rural, the farms still dispersed, and the population agricultural in its economy and social organization.

In 1903 a branch of the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad was constructed through the area, and with it the railroad secured rights to establish townsites, one of which was sold to the Arkansas Valley Townsite Company. That company then located a new town in the old Broken Arrow community and proceeded to sell lots³ and with its incorporation in May 1903, the organized town of Broken Arrow, Creek Nation, Indian Territory, was born. By the time Oklahoma became a state and Indian Territory disappeared in 1907, the young town held a population of 1383.⁴ The area had been transformed and the basis of a white-dominated civil society had emerged.

1934), 151-152.

² H. Cecil Rhoades, "Establishment and Development of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma," M.A. Thesis, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1955, 10-16. This was subsequently reprinted in pamphlet form under the same title (n.p.: Moongate Enterprises, 1976).

³ Rhoades, "Establishment and Development of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma," 25-26, 35.

⁴ Rhoades, "Establishment and Development of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma," 28.

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Broken Arrow Elementary School
Tulsa County, Oklahoma

One of the earliest institutions to emerge from the new town of Broken Arrow was a school. A Ladies School Aid Society raised funds in the spring of 1903 for a school and a voluntary subscription—a five-mill levy on personal property—increased the amount available so that in the autumn of that year, classes met with three teachers, one hundred seventy students, and no permanent building. School convened that year for a term of five months in the Methodist Church, although after that term, two of the teachers continued on a subscription basis. In the meantime, efforts to establish a permanent school continued and in 1904 the city imposed a tax to provide funds to build a school. The site chosen for this building was just north of the center of town, on Block 30, which had been used as a public square and on which trees had been planted that spring. The owner, Guy Bowman, President of the Arkansas Valley Townsite Company, deeded the block to the school district provided (1) that it would be turned over to the county if Broken Arrow should become county seat and also (2) that the school would be a stone or brick building not less than two stories high.⁵ The Ladies School Aid Society presented a large bell to the school in October and the school opened for classes in November 1904.⁶ The building met the requirements of the deed, barely, in that it had two rooms on the ground floor and two rooms on the second floor. In 1905 four more rooms and an auditorium were added.⁷

For two decades the school building on Block 30 served the needs of the growing community. That growth accelerated during the late 1910s and early 1920s as a result of an oil boom in Oklahoma that impacted locally, especially as it converged with an agricultural downturn by 1924 that forced more and more people in the countryside to move to the city.

⁵ Rhoades, "Establishment and Development of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma," 55.

⁶ Rhoades, "Establishment and Development of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma," 53, 56.

⁷ Rhoades, "Establishment and Development of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma," 56; Sanborn Map Company, "Broken Arrow, Creek Nation, Indian Territory," March 1905 and August 1907.

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Broken Arrow Elementary School

Tulsa County, Oklahoma

The drilling of oil wells in the surrounding area contributed to a population expansion for the towns, and it also meant that more students had to be served by the school system. But as the population pressures increased, the physical plant of the school declined. In 1917 when the short-lived Haskell Agricultural College closed, the Broken Arrow High School moved into the vacant building and relieved some of the pressure on the old school house whose tablet read simply "Public School."⁸ What had become the grade school in the original building had increased to an eleven-room structure, but even those additions were insufficient to allow all students to be served on a full time basis. Moreover, the deterioration of the building was such that in the spring of 1925 the fire marshal informed the school district that the building could no longer be used.⁹

Broken Arrow Elementary School and Education in a Changing Society

The response to the crisis was swift and efficient as the school board secured plans for a new building and placed a bond issue before the voters in June. If the bond issue were not approved, the local newspaper advised, "it would mean no school the coming term as it would be impossible to find suitable quarters for more than 500 scholars for a term of nine months."¹⁰ The architect who prepared the design for the building, A. J. Love of Love and Company Architects of Tulsa, had, according to news accounts, "erected most of the school buildings in this neck of the woods in the past several years."¹¹ The bond issue passed, the contractor bids were taken and by August the general contract had been let to A. M. Allen of Siloam Springs, Arkansas, for a fee of \$58,900.¹² The new building would be complete within six months.

⁸ Rhoades, "Establishment and Development of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma," 61.

⁹ Broken Arrow *Ledger-Democrat*, June 4, 1925.

¹⁰ Broken Arrow *Ledger-Democrat*, June 4, 1925.

¹¹ Broken Arrow *Ledger-Democrat*, June 4, 1925.

¹² Broken Arrow *Ledger-Democrat*, June 4, 11, July 16, August 13, 1925.

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Broken Arrow Elementary School

Tulsa County, Oklahoma

While there is a recurring legend in the community that the 1904 school was destroyed by fire, actually the fire marshal's fear of impending conflagration never was fulfilled and the school building had to be dismantled. Indeed, the contractor offset some of the construction fee by paying five thousand dollars for the salvage materials and had started work dismantling the building by the end of August; in early September the local newspaper reported that the "old grade school building is rapidly being torn down and stakes are being set for the new building."¹³ While the school was being constructed on Block 30, the grade school students were distributed to makeshift classrooms in various nearby churches. The chairs and desks from the old school had, in fact, been removed to those churches for exactly that use. The bell, taken from the original building's prominent belfry, was relocated to an unidentified point near the new school and continued to summon students to class in the morning and after lunch. The bell signaled not the change of classes, but the time (8:30 a.m. and 12:45 p.m.) when students should leave their homes to return to the school ground, and then again for them to enter the building (8:55 a.m. and 1:10 p.m.), and the parents were repeatedly urged to keep their children at home until after the first bell had rung.¹⁴ Progress on the new building continued, with some nearby students reporting that "The cement mixer too 'sings' its daily song with the soft pedal on and disturbs us not in the least."¹⁵ The building had proceeded well enough that the laying of the cornerstone by the Masonic Order took place in a grand ceremony on November 9, with the grade school students participating and the high school orchestra playing. That cornerstone held a collection of unidentified documents sealed in a copper receptacle where they would be "preserved for future citizens of Broken Arrow."¹⁶ By the turn of the new

¹³ Broken Arrow *Ledger-Democrat*, August 27, September 3, 1925.

¹⁴ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, September 17, 24, 1925.

¹⁵ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, October 1, 1925.

¹⁶ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, November 5, 12, 1925.

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year, the rooms were being plastered, the auditorium and central part of the building—the final parts to be undertaken—were taking shape, window frames were in place in the wings, and the building was nearly enclosed.¹⁷ By March, the painters were finishing their work, the plumbing had been completed, the light fixtures installed, and the grounds leveled. On April 2, a Friday, Chamber of Commerce volunteers moved the seats from the churches back to the school, and the next Monday, April 5, 1926, Broken Arrow Elementary School was occupied and classes from primary (kindergarten) to the eighth grade opened in the new building. As the fifth grade reported to the public: “We are moved.”¹⁸ True to the terms of the original grant of land, the school building into which the students relocated had two rooms on a second floor, even though the preponderance of the structure was a single story.

The structure of education in the nation in the 1920s was in a process of transition. The conventional system of education, as Broken Arrow Elementary School illustrated, divided the twelve years of public schooling into two parts, the elementary, grades one through eight, and the high school, the remaining four grades, freshman through senior. Expectations for education, though, tended to emphasize the necessity of completion of the first eight grades while the attrition rate beyond eighth grade increased dramatically. One study of education in Oklahoma at the time revealed that in 1927-1928 86.2% of the total school enrollment was in the elementary grades and only 13.8% was in high school—indicating a disproportionate number not continuing on to high school graduation.¹⁹ The same pattern held true in Broken Arrow. For example, one year after the grade school opened in its new building, commencement exercises revealed both the importance associated with graduating from the eighth grade and the common inability of many to continue their studies through high school. Commencement exercises from the eighth

¹⁷ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, January 7, 1926.

¹⁸ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, March 25, April 8, 1926.

¹⁹ Jennings J. Rhyne, *Social and Community Problems of Oklahoma* (Guthrie: Co-Operative Publishing Co., 1929), 91.

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grade in 1927, scheduled for the grade school auditorium, were as elaborate, as significant a rite of passage as senior high graduation would be for later generations. A special commencement speaker, orchestra, and other trappings embellished the festivity, which was not held during school hours but in the evening to underscore the pride of the community in the event and to permit maximum attendance. At that ceremony forty-five scholars graduated from the eighth grade. By contrast, the high school graduation the same week conferred diplomas on only twenty-seven students.²⁰ The sources of this disparity proved elusive to many investigators at the time. The State Department of Public Instruction noted simply that the compulsory attendance laws (requiring school attendance for two-thirds of the term for pupils aged between eight and eighteen) did not apply to people over sixteen who had completed the eighth grade.²¹ And this was not just a problem for rural schools, where it was noted, children routinely missed large chunks of school time or dropped out to help on the farm, especially in the cotton belt "where boys and girls of school age are frequently kept out of school to work on the farm."²² The same report noted the urban dimension of the same problem: "the opportunity for employment of students of high school age may be somewhat greater in the more populous communities."²³ Caught between its rural past, where students from rural areas were sufficiently numerous that the end of October marked an officially sanctioned "cotton picking week" for grades three and up in the Broken Arrow school (during which students were released to work on their own family fields or those of others), and its urban future, where pressures to find work in town increased, the Broken Arrow school struggled against powerful forces to assure education for the first eight grades certainly, and hopefully more than that.

²⁰ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, May 5, 1927.

²¹ State Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Thirteenth Biennial Report, 1928-1930* (Oklahoma City: State of Oklahoma, 1930), 12.

²² State Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Seventeenth Biennial Report [1936-1938]*, (Oklahoma City: State of Oklahoma, 1938), 47-49.

²³ State Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Seventeenth Biennial Report [1936-1938]*, 54.

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One additional pressure came as a result of the success of the efforts of the schools to increase what the State Superintendent of Public Instruction called a school's "holding power." The compulsory education laws may have had limited effect for those students beyond the eighth grade, but they were increasingly effective for young people aged eight to sixteen. Thus enrollment in the grade school continued to grow. With the larger numbers of students, though, came another consequence that was not just quantitative. More young people were attending school who otherwise might not have. The student population thus was physically different as well as more numerous. Historian Lawrence A. Cremin, in his important study of education in the nation, noted that "Thousands of recalcitrants and incorrigibles who in former times might have dropped out of school now became public charges for a minimum period. And as the school-leaving age moved progressively upward, every problem was aggravated as youngsters became bigger, stronger, and more resourceful."²⁴ The result of this circumstance was the emergence of the junior high school movement, an effort to divide the schools into a six-three-three (also sometimes termed a six-six) organization instead of an eight-four pattern, thereby separating young adolescents from both their younger and older counterparts and providing an environment appropriate for people of that age and distinct level of physical maturity. Despite the lack of specific sanctioning of junior high schools in state legislation, the State Department of Public Instruction managed in 1929 to encourage the creation of such schools—or more accurately, to encourage the separation of grades six through nine from both elementary schools and high schools.²⁵

In Broken Arrow, the convergence of two sets of circumstances generated changes in the school system, and in the school building. One factor was greater enrollment in grade school and the changes in the students who were attending school in the upper grades at

²⁴ Lawrence A. Cremin, *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1961), 127-128.

²⁵ State Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Thirteenth Biennial Report, 1928-1930*, 62-63.

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that school. This was, after all, part of the national trend. The second development, however, was located blocks away at the high school. With greater "holding power" and increased student retention in the high school, that building also was becoming congested. Even though, in 1930, the number of eighth grade graduates still exceeded the high school graduates by a factor of two, the high school graduated thirty-five that year, as compared to the twenty-five three years earlier. When school started in the fall of 1930, the school district expected to have around three hundred students in high school, a number that simply could not be accommodated with the existing physical plant. The solution to the problem of increased enrollment and changing nature of the student body in the elementary school and the overburdened high school was the same: the establishment of a junior high school in Broken Arrow. In May 1930, the local board of education proposed the construction of two classrooms and a junior high library, to be added to the existing grade school.²⁶ Acknowledging the circumstance requiring expansion of physical facilities, the local superintendent also noted that the new rooms, to be used "for junior high or ninth grade pupils which are now being taught at the high school building," would meet state department standards for junior high "that requires seventh, eighth, and ninth grades to be together, either in a segregated building or in a building with other grades." Failure to do so, and to permit overcrowding, could result in a loss of accreditation for the schools.²⁷ Thus a new bond issue went before the voters and passed within a matter of weeks. W. E. Corlett of Vinita received the contract and by the end of September, 1930, a new wing was added to the northwest corner of the grade school building, or as it was termed at the beginning of the process, "the new junior high school building which will adjoin the grade school on the north and west."²⁸ Broken Arrow now had a junior high school and the enrollment in those three grades exceeded any other three grades in the school system.²⁹

²⁶ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, May 8, 15, 1930.

²⁷ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, May 8, 15, 1930.

²⁸ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, May 22, June 26, 1930

²⁹ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, September 25, 1930

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Because of the deepening Depression afflicting the local economy along with the rest of the nation, the junior high addition to the school building would be the last expansion for a long time. Indeed budget cuts—sometimes drastic reductions, as in 1934—were the norm and required system-wide belt-tightening; talk of further expansion was pointless in such an environment. Ironically, the enrollment burden increased at the same time that funds dwindled. A week after the local newspaper announced the severe budget reduction for the school district in 1934, the same newspaper announced that the Broken Arrow schools had registered record enrollments.³⁰ Classrooms were crowded, textbooks were shared, teaching burdens swelled, and the physical plant decayed. Occasional assistance came in an indirect form, as when one of the earliest New Deal relief agencies, the Civil Works Administration, made funds available to the community to be used for a variety of projects, including school improvements. In January 1934 twenty workers were employed making repairs on the school buildings in the district; even this, however, provided only the most basic of building maintenance, not expansion. These funds made it possible to accomplish necessary structural repairs and painting, tasks that had gone wanting.³¹ Other help came from local volunteers. The Big Brothers Club, for example, sponsored a project called the School Kitchen, beginning in 1934, to serve free lunches to children who needed them, a number that appears to have been more than incidental.³² Classes continued and the school fulfilled its central mission of education, but the building also was more than a group of classrooms under one roof. The auditorium / gymnasium was used by the entire school system for various functions, including graduation ceremonies, Education Week programs, school operettas, and Thanksgiving programs and was also used as a community center for public gatherings and events; some of these were outreach activities like a summer canning

³⁰ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, September 6, 13, 1934.

³¹ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, January 4, 1934.

³² Rhoades, "Establishment and Development of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma," 69.

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program designed to help people put up vegetables.³³ And while World War II brought an improvement in the economy, the wartime restrictions on building activities meant essentially a continuation of Depression level funding and construction.

Once again there is an irony: In prosperous times many public buildings in the nation have been renovated, expanded, and otherwise altered so that their historic integrity has been lost. In the case of the Broken Arrow Grade School, the inability to respond to pressing needs in the school physical plant also meant that the building would not be modified and was thus shielded, for better or worse, from the pressures and opportunities for change. When such modification came, it came as an accident. In the early morning of August 7, 1944 a fire started in the gymnasium / auditorium of the school. The roof of that section was engulfed in flames before a neighbor noticed the conflagration and called the fire department. Fire fighters were able to confine the fire to the gymnasium and the center section of the main part of the building, but the damage was extensive. The entire gymnasium / auditorium was a complete loss, the main entrance to the building was damaged, and the classrooms on the second floor, above the entrance, were heavily damaged. The boiler room in the basement of the center section, adjacent to the gymnasium, was also heavily impacted. It was summer, it was early in the morning, and the building was empty, so no personal injuries were reported, but the damage to the building itself proved extensive. Moreover, school was scheduled to start within a few weeks, and the challenges—financial and practical, given wartime shortages—to undertake the repairs and replacement appeared daunting. The school board met that night, and the local press reported the mood: “School officials view the future with considerable gloom. With construction costs at high peak and materials hard to find, the situation justifies serious consideration The war has brought added burden upon the grade school system together with higher costs of operation.” Remarkably, however, within the day the school board managed to hire A. J. Love, the architect who had designed the original building almost two decades earlier, to take over the project, “to supervise the repair job,” and to work with the insurance companies to arrive at a financial settlement.³⁴ The

³³ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, November 23, 1933, January 25, 1934, October 25, 1934, November 1, 1934.

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emergency repairs Love directed began immediately, focusing on the second story classrooms over the entrance so that they would be useable. The school district's request for building materials for this part was immediately cleared by wartime economic planning officials, but those officials objected to the replacement of the auditorium at that time, given the circumstances of war and the need for materiel elsewhere. When school opened, one class met temporarily in the school kitchen and the ninth grade moved to the high school for its classes.³⁵ Once again, the school was in active use, even as repairs proceeded.

The reluctance of war materiel officials to approve a larger replacement project for the gymnasium converged with another development to postpone any new construction. When the insurance settlement was reached, it was only for \$24,794, an amount slightly over half the estimated loss. So the school lacked both authority and money to replace the gymnasium.³⁶ Moreover, the school system had previously indicated a priority in its plans for constructing a new high school and bonds had been voted for that project. In those plans, evidently, the new high school would at last have its own auditorium / gymnasium. Now the school board sought to build a new high school and two gymnasiums; but there was a war going on, both money and materials were scarce, and hard choices had to be made. In the meantime, the entire system, as the local newspaper reported, "will, of course, still be without use of an auditorium or gymnasium."³⁷ Finally, with the conclusion of the war in August, and with a rough transition to a peacetime economy, the board proposed in January 1946 a new bond issue. With the \$47,000 generated by those bonds, the district promised it would build the new high school and as much more construction as funds would permit. Between February, when the bonds were approved (245 yes, 7 no), and July, when bids were finally let, the board had somehow managed to, if not reverse those

³⁴ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, August 10, 17, 1944.

³⁵ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, August 24, 1944.

³⁶ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, September 28, 1944.

³⁷ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, December 7, 1944, August 30, 1945.

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priorities, at least give them equal weight. In July the Broken Arrow *Ledger* reported that construction on the auditorium / gymnasium at the grade school was "to start at once," while work on the high school would begin "in the near future."³⁸ Once again, it appears that A. J. Love directed the project and, moreover, that he also designed the new high school. And so a new auditorium / gymnasium was constructed at the elementary school, larger than the original, but consistent in its design elements. The work also included an additional classroom built between the two fourth grade classrooms on the second floor (above the entrance), a new ladies lounge, and incidental other repairs to the building.³⁹

The aftermath of war enabled the construction of the replacement gymnasium / auditorium to proceed, but it also ushered in another development that would have a delayed impact on the school system. With the end of the war and the conclusion of an arduous fifteen or twenty years marked by either severe economic crisis or wartime exigency, opportunities broadened in the nation's economy and society for the realization of long-postponed dreams and aspirations. In that environment, as historian Elaine Tyler May expressed in her study of families in the post-World War II period, "Procreation in the Cold War era took on almost mythic proportions."⁴⁰ Indeed, the baby boom began immediately after the war and grew in volume; one obvious consequence of that increase in the child population was a dramatically increased burden for the schools to bear. The first representatives of that post-war generation arrived at school at age six, in 1952. And so began another phase of the expansion of Broken Arrow Grade School. Anticipating the surge in enrollment, in 1951 voters approved a \$70,000 bond issue to add four new classrooms to the grade school to prepare for the new students. By March 1952, however, it became apparent that neither that number of rooms nor that amount of money would be enough. Yet one more classroom was needed, so the school district asked voters to approve a millage assessment

³⁸ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, January 24, February 7, June 6, July 4, July 18, 1946.

³⁹ Broken Arrow *Ledger*, August 22, 1946, March 13, 1947.

⁴⁰ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Harper Collins Books, 1988), 135.

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to cover the additional expense. And even so, with juggling classes into different rooms, they feared that it might be necessary to find still more space, either in a nearby church or in the Veterans' Building, to temporarily locate a class. The millage was approved, construction was undertaken, and the additional rooms were added to the south of the west wing of the building before autumn. When it was complete, the school had twenty classrooms and a teachers' lounge (that had to be used as a classroom that first year). The junior high had been completely redecorated on the upper floors, with the basement scheduled for similar treatment soon afterwards. And some of the junior high classes had to be held outside the building. With the exception of the subsequent addition of the cafeteria on the southwest corner of the building, this school had reached its final, modern configuration.

In the years since 1952, the school has continued to serve the community as a central feature of the public school system in Broken Arrow. Shortly after the 1952 expansion, as the growth of the baby boom mushroomed, even more space was needed and the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades were moved to another location, thus freeing up space. The grade school was renamed North Main Grade School briefly, and when Southside Elementary School opened in 1955 the junior high moved back to the building, then known as Central Junior High. With yet another curriculum modification, the school became Broken Arrow Central Middle School in 1976 and has remained that since. In January 2003, however, the Central Middle School for the first time in the history of the building will have no students and teachers busy in its classrooms, no noisy throngs surging through its halls, no applause of parents nor echoes from the shouts of athletes and crowd in its gymnasium / auditorium. The students, teachers, and staff will move to the new Centennial Middle School and the school district will use the old school for other purposes. When the students leave, though, they will leave behind them not just a building, but an institution that has served the purposes and processes of education, which is to say also the community and its citizens, for over three-fourths of a century. In the period of its historic significance, and beyond, the school has also served as a reflection of fundamental contours and patterns of change in American society. In that way, the Broken Arrow Elementary School, as it was known for most of its period of historic significance, 1926-1953, qualifies for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A.

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Verbal Boundary Description

This property includes all of Block 30, Original Town of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma.

Boundary Justification

This boundary includes the property historically associated with the Broken Arrow Elementary School