United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property		
historic name <u>Jackson Conoco Service Station</u>		===
other names/site number		
2. Location		==
street & number 301 South Choctaw [121 W. Wade] city or town El Reno state Oklahoma code OK county	not for publication N/A vicinity N/A code 017 zip code 73036	

3. State/Federal Agency Certification
5. State/Tederal Agency Certification
As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  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:  ventered 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):
outor (express).
Signature of Keeper Date
of Action

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Fo	rm
Jackson Conoco Service Station	
Canadian County, Oklahoma	

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5. Classification
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)  _x_ private public-local public-State public-Federal
Category of Property (Check only one box)  _x_building(s) districtsitestructureobject
Number of Resources within Property
Contributing Noncontributing  buildings sites structures objects Total
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register <u>0</u>
Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma

. Function or Use
Sistoric Functions (Enter categories from instructions)  Sat: COMMERCE/TRADE Sub: specialty store
Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)  Cat: COMMERCE/TRADE Sub: specialty store
. Description
Inchitectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)  Commercial  Interials (Enter categories from instructions)  foundationconcrete  roofasphalt  wallsglazed 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)
_x 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.
_x 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.
_x G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.
Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)  Transportation  Architecture
Period of Significance 1934-1970

Primary Location of Additional Data x State Historic Preservation Office

\_ previously listed in the National Register

\_ designated a National Historic Landmark

\_ previously determined eligible by the National Register

\_ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Other State agency
Federal agency

requested.

\_\_\_ Local government

\_\_\_ University

x Other

Name of repository: El Reno Public Library

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10. Geographical Data
Acreage of Property <u>less than five acres</u>
UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing  1 14 594808E 3932270N 3 2 4  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 Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office date October 29, 2003
street & number 304 W. 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)

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form
Jackson Conoco Service Station
Canadian County, Oklahoma

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Property Owner
(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)
name Mark Waller
street & number 301 South Choctaw telephone 405 262-9771
city or town El Reno state OK zip code 73036

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Jackson Conoco Service Station
Name of property
Canadian County, Oklahoma
County and State
"Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma"
Multiple property listing

### **Description**

Jackson Conoco Service Station is a single-story house-with-bays gasoline service station built in 1934 and added onto in 1964. The design and materials of the original building conform to the pattern the Continental Oil Company used in its construction of service stations in the 1930s, the single variant being the left or right positioning of the front-facing gable, both of which were used by Conoco.

The original station is a T-shaped building constructed with bright white glazed brick (reportedly imported from Europe). The office section, on the north, is ten feet wide on the west elevation and eight feet on its north elevation, with a steeply pitched gable on the north, the entrance to the office centered on the west elevation under the sloping eave. Twin large multi-light metal windows flank the centered doorway and a similar set of multi-light windows is located on the north elevation of the office. On that north elevation, the west and east elevations are corbeled out to support the eaves Smaller windows on the north open to the women's restroom which has an entrance on the east, or rear of the building. All windows include contrasting red brick lintels and sills. In the north gable a distinctive vertical vent with wooden louvers (a signature element of the Conoco stations) provides ventilation, and the vent has the same red brick lintel and sill as the windows. The east elevation includes only the entrance to the women's restroom.

Next to the office, on the south, is a section that is slightly larger on each elevation, thus giving the building its T-shape. This part contains a single-bay service garage with the entrance on the west elevation under the gable that intersects with the gable roof of the office. Matching the office windows and doors, the lintel over the vehicle door is made of red soldier-coursed brick and the vertical vent above, in the gable, exactly matches that in the north gable. The south elevation of the garage is enclosed in the new garage that was added in 1964. The east elevation of the garage section of the original structure likewise projects beyond the east elevation of the office and is constructed of the same white glazed brick. The vent in the gable and the multi-light window below it match the corresponding features on the other elevations. Originally all elevations of this building were intended to be seen and no shortcuts were made just because the east elevation happened to be the rear of the building.

On the original building, one distinguishing feature, common to other Conoco stations of this vintage, is the decorative corbeling at the corners to support the eaves as they project beyond the elevation. Near the center of the building, on the roof above the office, a white glazed brick chimney rises at the ridge and is capped with corbeled red brick. The roof on the original structure is green asphalt shingle.

The addition is connected to the south elevation of the original station and was constructed in 1964, during the period of its historic significance and is part of the historical evolution of the building. Although this section has a hipped roof and is larger than the initial construction (thus reflecting also a change in the function of the station which came to

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emphasize its automobile service aspects more than originally), the critical feature is that the elevations are made of the same white glazed brick as the original station; in fact, the sliding overhead doors in the two bays, while not identical to the original door on the older section, resemble it closely with three rows of glass lights in the upper portion and two rows of wood panels below. As with the original service bay, a row of soldier coursed red bricks forms the lintel above the two bays on the addition, thus giving the building a consistency essential for maintaining its architectural integrity. The south elevation is made of concrete blocks painted white, the same as the east elevation.

The curbing that originally formed a close perimeter around the building remains, although the flowers and shrubs that formed another element of the home-related theme of the building are no longer present.

A pump island is located immediately west of and parallel to the building and while the pumps and the metal tree holding the air hose and water hose attachments and plumbing have been removed, the metal canopy added probably in 1964 remains. A similar pump island located north of the station has been removed too. These features are considered noncontributing.

The Jackson Conoco was used as a service station until about 1990 and its continued functionality as it served the needs of the traveling public along the road well after the demise of Route 66 and the careful attention of its owners in maintaining the building have assured its sustained integrity of location, appearance, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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Narrative Statement of Significance

## **Summary**

The building that has been known for most of its history as Jackson Conoco in El Reno, Oklahoma is significant within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma." Constructed in 1934 as part of the newly reorganized Continental Oil Company's aggressive marketing and distribution initiative, this station was positioned to take advantage of the increasing traffic on Route 66. For three decades this station served that traffic until Route 66 was replaced with the interstate highway that ran south of town, but even so, as Route 66 remained on the map, and was traveled by a lesser number, so too did the station remain through the period of historical significance. Because of this association, the building qualifies within that multiple property nomination under Criterion A and represents the property type, "Gasoline / Service Stations" in the area of significance of Transportation. Moreover, because the property was constructed to fulfill a consciously promulgated image of Conoco stations and branding and represents a distinctive type of station, it also is significant for its architectural qualities and associations as required under that multiple property nomination, and thereby also meets the requirements of Criterion C.

#### **Historical Background**

El Reno was founded officially with a post office in 1889, but effectively launched a robust, independent life around 1897 as an alternative to the townsite of Reno City; the new town possessed the distinct advantage of being adjacent to the Rock Island Railroad which was building south and opening up the country of the various Indian reservations in the southwest quarter of the future state. The community had a permanent population of about 7500 at the beginning of the twentieth century, but in 1901 temporary residents ballooned the figure to around 60,000 as a huge crowd congregated in the town for the drawing of lots for land on the former Kiowa, Comanche, Caddo, and Wichita reservations and remained for weeks afterwards. As the population then returned to its normal level, the town began a period of growth, in part because it was at the junction of the Rock Island Railroad, with a regional headquarters and maintenance facility there, and also because it was located on what became known in the 1910s and 1920s as the Postal Road, a thoroughfare that crossed Oklahoma laterally from Fort Smith on the Arkansas border, through Oklahoma City and then El Reno, to Texola on the Texas border. Although that road was not paved west of Oklahoma City, automobile traffic in the state was increasing and the business community of El Reno reflected the surge with its string of service stations located on the main road as it snaked its way through town.

The particular configuration of the Postal Road reflected its main purpose in the eye of the community; instead of passing through the town on a single main street, it was routed in such a way that it passed by major retail businesses

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where, it was hoped, the travelers would pause before they proceeded on their way east or west. And, in 1926, when Route 66 was designated, it followed that stairstep zigzag route through town and past the same businesses.

### **Origins and Historical Significance of Jackson Conoco**

One of the businesses along Route 66 in El Reno was the service station operated by the Marland Oil Company of Ponca City. Situated strategically at the corner of Wade and Choctaw where Route 66 came from the east and turned to the north, the Marland gas station was a triangular building, built to conform to the triangular logo of the company. In fact, that station, constructed in 1924, was part of a wave of construction of those stations in that year. The previous year, E. W. Marland, owner and guiding force of the oil company, had taken advantage of an opportunity to expand his company's retailing outlets when investment banker J. P. Morgan, Jr., purchased a significant amount of the company's stock. With that money Marland built five hundred of these gas stations, many of them, perhaps most, of the triangular design like this one at the corner of Wade and Choctaw. By 1926 Marland had over six hundred stations in the Midwest. 2



Marland Refining Company Station, southeast corner of Wade and Choctaw, El Reno. about 1925

The same forces that produced this Marland station in 1924, however, also worked to see it replaced with a Conoco station ten years later. Morgan's stock purchase had certainly meant that Marland was able to expand; but it also meant that his control of his own company was now shared with New York bankers. Increasingly Marland lost power in the company and by 1928 he was literally forced out and the next year Marland Oil Company merged with another, smaller, company based in Denver, the Continental Oil Company—Conoco. On July 16, 1929, the Marland gasoline station at the corner of Wade and Choctaw in El Reno transferred from the Marland Refining Company to the Continental Oil Company. But it was more than a change in ownership. Once the merger took place, as the official company history reports, "The words "Marland Oils' were painted out on every tank car, filling station, pump station and building and replaced with one word: 'Conoco.' " One Conoco vice president John Morrow later recalled that "J. P. Morgan wanted the merger simply because he was looking for any way to do away with the Marland name." " So other changes also began, and in the early 1930s most of the triangular stations, so firmly associated with the Marland Oil Company,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Russ Banham, *Conoco: 125 Years of Energy* (Lyme, Connecticut: Greenwich Publishing Group, Inc., 2000), 60.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Continental Oil Company, Conoco: The First One Hundred Years (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1975), 102.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Banham, Conoco: 125 Years of Energy, 65, 67, 74.

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were replaced with new Conoco stations which had a Tudor house-with-bays appearance. Ultimately this station was one of those replaced.

For several years the gas station appears to have been neglected as Conoco reorganized the company, restructured

its operation, and reformulated its image. For a brief period the station may even have been leased to an independent operator. Jacob C. Schubert, with no brand affiliation; the 1930 city directory lists neither a Marland nor a Conoco station at this location. That all changed in 1934 when the actual construction of the new Conoco gasoline station finally came. At that time Conoco and the city of El Reno agreed to allow Conoco to change the sidewalks and gutters surrounding the perimeter of the lots containing the service station. thereby permitting a revision of the driveways allowing customers onto the property. A new station, this one with a service bay, replaced the already antiquated triangle Marland station. This new business would be known as Jackson Conoco, because of its longtime manager, Carleton Jackson. At least as early as 1938, and probably earlier, Mr. Jackson operated the station for its owner, Conoco, and continued to run it during the remainder of the 1930s. through the 1940s, and into the 1950s.

During those years the station's business grew, reflecting fundamental contours of demography and commerce along this important transportation corridor. One of the critical factors contributing to the success of Conoco during the 1930s was the rise of automobile travel, and Route 66 was both an important component and symbol of that traffic. In fact, the year of the construction of this station coincided with the opening of a new, paved route west of El Reno with a shorter path that made travel all the more inviting. And it



Typical Conoco 1930s station, from Russ Banham, *Conoco: 125 Years of Energy* (Lyme, Connecticut: Greenwich Publishing Group, Inc., 2000). Photo © Conoco.

also coincided with the migration of vast numbers of people from their homes in Oklahoma and Arkansas west to hoped-for new opportunities in California. A Ithough the flood of people to California suggests the impact of the Depression on the area, that migration ironically helped some of the businesses along the road prosper, including the gasoline and service stations. For this was, in fact, a service station, not just a store for the dispensing of gasoline. The service bay gave Jackson a strategic edge and Jackson Conoco regularly advertised its operation as comprehensive, including such features as: "Gates Tires & Tubes," "High Pressure Motor Cleaning System," "45 Min. Battery Recharging Service," and, of course, it was located right on Route 66. Moreover, although the early listings of the gas station place its address as 301 South Choctaw, an accurate listing because the station fronted on Choctaw, Jackson Conoco was more frequently listed as 121 West Wade—an address that placed it clearly on Route 66 that

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passed to the north side of the west facing station. It was often listed also as simply "Corner Wade and Choctaw," an unmistakable reference to its Route 66 location, given that Route 66 turned at that corner.

By 1939 the El Reno *American*, a local newspaper, could editorialize on the impact of Route 66 locally: "Canadian county is most fortunate to be traversed by this noted artery as its scenic advantages are bound to make it eventually the most traveled of any of the major highways in the west. . . . The flood of tourists is just beginning over 66 and within a few years will reach startling proportions." In a possible retort to those who were concerned with unsavory images of destitute masses of people traveling the nation's roads (and the movie *The Grapes of Wrath* was released in 1939), the same editorial reminded local businesspeople that "Some of the nation's best people are traveling the highways these days and they are able and willing to pay for services, accommodations and recreation on the way. They contribute a valuable resource for the community so fortunate as to be able to attract them and El Reno is one of the lucky communities." 4

The years of World War II were hard for the automobile service stations because of the rationing of their products and because of the dampened volume of traffic and road construction, but this was especially a challenge to the new or marginal stations. Those like Jackson Conoco, with a prime location, established business, and brand identity, managed to survive, and after the war, when the tourist boom really started, they prospered dramatically. By 1952, even though Carleton Jackson still lived in El Reno, the station had a new manager and a new name, so that now it was Al Needs' Conoco—still retaining its Conoco branding identity.

After the surge of Route 66 traffic in the post war period, the business continued to operate and apparently did well. Yet the economics of operating a service station had altered, the competition was greater, and the traffic gravitated more to the super stations for quick service rather than pausing at prominent local institutions. So the Conoco station changed hands frequently. By 1956 it had as its new manager John Stroffe; in 1958, possibly a transition between lessees, it was not listed at all; in 1962 it was George's Conoco; and two years later it was Blackwell & Son Conoco, and the next year it was Alva's Conoco. The last change, however, ran deeper than a change in name. In November 1964 Conoco sold the station to A. M. Cavin and his wife who then leased the property back to Conoco. The Cavins also took out a mortgage from Conoco, evidently to build the two-bay service garage to the south of the original. This transaction effectively reversed the traditional relationship at the station where Conoco owned the property and hired a manager so that now the company transferred some of the long-term investment risk to the operator who could stand to profit or lose from the purchase of the property. In other words, the future for the service station, for some reason, was sufficiently unclear in 1964 that Conoco chose to reduce its commitment.

The reason for the doubts was not far away. Many merchants and chambers of commerce and community leaders had sought the continual improvement and widening of Route 66 to facilitate the burgeoning traffic that the road

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> El Reno American, August 17, 1939.

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invited, but the response of the federal government in the mid-1950s provided something more than they had in mind. Under the 1956 Interstate Highway Act the federal government inaugurated not only new roads but a new *network* of roads throughout the nation and these roads would be four-lane divided highways, ninety percent paid for by the federal government. Route 66 was going to be not just widened and streamlined, but even replaced. By 1962 the new I-40 ran south of El Reno, bypassing the community, and west of town the new interstate even became a new alignment of Route 66. Although Route 66 continued to wind its way through El Reno, turning several times including at the corner of Wade and Choctaw, the traffic that it once brought to the pumps and service bays of the Conoco station was also being channeled several miles south so that access was neither automatic nor even convenient. What Route 66 brought, it could also take away.

The station changed hands at least one more time during the period of historic significance and in 1969 was known as Paul's Conoco. By that time, however, there was no doubt that the station's association with Route 66, as mutually powerful forces contributing to each other, was fading.

Today the station remains at the corner of Wade and Choctaw, as the location of a used automobile dealership. The owners have endeavored successfully to maintain the original appearance of the station and its gleaming white brick and distinctive design easily provide a connection through the years to the history of Route 66 as an agent of transformation in Oklahoma communities. Because of this intimate association with Route 66, the Jackson Conoco Station qualifies for the National Register of Historic Places within the Multiple Property nomination, "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma" as a representative of the property type "Gasoline / Service Stations" in the area of significance Transportation.

#### **Architectural Significance of Jackson Conoco**

Jackson Conoco Service Station is also significant under Criterion C because it represents a distinct type and period of construction.

At the time of its construction, Conoco sought to create a consistent pattern of service station buildings that would, by their very construction and design, convey an identity associated with the brand and thereby attract customers to its portals along the nation's highways. The house-with-bays style that Conoco developed became immediately recognizable and historically distinct because of the attention to design, detail, and consistency in each unit. This station reflects these qualities. Moreover, and in an unusual twist, this building also sought to erase another branded form of construction, the triangular building associated with the predecessor Marland Oil Company.

Broadly considered, the house-with-bays appearance had as its origin the desire to help the commercial gasoline operation blend into, and be accepted by, residential neighborhoods. At the same time, however, that the station sought to convey an image of domestic tranquility, even romanticism, it also unmistakably communicated a corporate image

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with its consistency of design and colors. The house-with-bays station quickly emerged as one of the distinct gas station designs in the early history of the automobile in the nation, and Route 66 provided a key venue for that development.<sup>5</sup>

Historians John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle have traced this development with a special focus on Pure Oil in other parts of the country, but the main contours of that use and rise of the similar cottage station can be applied to Pure Oil's Midwest counterpart, Phillips 66. In fact, another student of the process, John Margolies, has explicitly argued that

Two major oil companies, Pure and Phillips, introduced quaint English country cottage-style stations in 1927. Pure Oil introduced its blue-and-white "rain spitter" (so nicknamed because of its steeply pitched blue tile roof) in Indianapolis, complete with window shutters, flower boxes, and a large bay window. The first Phillips cottage opened in Wichita, and by 1930 there were 6,750 of them in twelve states. The Phillips station had a central "chimney" (the Pure model had end chimneys), and each station was painted a distinctive dark green with orange and blue trim to make it stand out from the competition. 6

Conoco clearly was not the leader in drawing upon the idea of making its stations look like cottages or houses, and even picked up the concept from some of its competitors, notably Phillips 66 and Pure Oil. When Conoco built its chain of stations it altered the configuration and materials but retained the Tudor Revival impression. The basic plan included a steeply pitched, cross-gabled roof with a rectangular chimney. One part of the building would be used as an office / restroom area, and the other part as service bays—reflecting also the trend away from simple gas stations to stations where repairs and maintenance could be performed. The sharply pointed gables included louvered vertical vents. To distinguish the Conoco station from others, the company used a striking white-glazed brick on its elevations with red brick door surrounds and windowsills and lintels; the same red brick is used for sills and lintels in the vertical vents in the gables. The roof was characteristically green and the combination was an unmistakable reference to the company's colors: red, white, and green so that the buildings themselves were signs advertising the Conoco brand of gasoline and lubricants, what Jakle and others have referred to as "place-product-packaging." This Conoco house-with-bays station is one of two remaining on Route 66 in Oklahoma (the other being the Spraker Service Station in Vinita, NR 1995). The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, *The Gas Station in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 167-180.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> John Margolies, Pump and Circumstance: Glory Days of the Gas Station (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 55.

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gleaming white stations with the red and white trim that once served as standing advertisements for the brand of products sold at their pumps have often faded from the roadside, but those that remain are surely as clear a marker of Route 66 as the roadbed itself.

Jackson Conoco Service Station, as a representative of the property type "Gasoline / Service Stations," within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma" is eligible under Criterion C in the area of significance Architecture.

# **Summary**

Jackson Conoco in El Reno, Oklahoma, has been historically associated with Route 66 and qualifies for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places because of its historical significance under Criterion A and because of its architectural significance under Criterion C, both within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Route 66 and Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma."

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## Major Bibliographical References

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Canadian County Clerk, property records.

Continental Oil Company, Conoco: The First One Hundred Years (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1975).

El Reno American, August 17, 1939.

Jakle, John A., and Keith A. Sculle, *The Gas Station in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 167-180.

Margolies, John, *Pump and Circumstance: Glory Days of the Gas Station* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993).

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of El Reno, Oklahoma, 1920, 1924, 1928, 1960.

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Multiple property listing

# **Verbal Boundary Description**

This property includes lots 8, 9, and 10 of Block 118, Original Town of El Reno, Oklahoma.

# **Boundary Justification**

This boundary includes the property historically associated with Jackson Conoco Service Station.