

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

JUN 13 1983

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Escoe Building

and/or common Simmons Building

2. Location

street & number 228-230 North Second St.

N/A not for publication

city, town Muskogee

N/A vicinity of

state Oklahoma

code 40

county Muskogee

code 101

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name J. J. Simmons, Jr. Trustees

street & number P.O. Box 572

city, town Muskogee

N/A vicinity of

state Oklahoma 74401

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of County Clerk

street & number Muskogee County Courthouse

city, town Muskogee

state Oklahoma 74401

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1982

federal state county local

depository for survey records Oklahoma Historical Society - State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Oklahoma City

state Oklahoma 73105

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>NA</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Escoe (Simmons) Building is a two story commercial structure constructed of red brick laid in a common bond fashion with header course every eighth layer. Its dimensions are approximately 50' x 60'. The roof is flat with 2' parapet extending above roof on all sides except rear.

First floor windows include two large fixed pane types in the front, six large fixed pane windows on the side facing Court Street, one 2/2 rectangular-shaped and one 1/1 small window in rear. Second floor fenestration consists of six 1/1 double-hung sash windows in front, nine 1/1 double-hung sash windows in side facing Court Street, and four 1/1 double-hung sash windows in rear. All first floor windows in front and side are recessed with masonry facing above each.

Doors include one wooden type with large pane in the cutaway entry on the northwest corner of the building, one panel type with 24 lights approximately midway in front wall, one wooden type in side facing Court Street, and one wooden type in rear. There are four interior chimney stacks which are rectangular in shape.

Major decorative elements include six brick pilasters on the Court Street side, each of which separates one or two windows. There is a blind arcade in the southeast corner of the first floor of the Court Street side.

All windows are topped with brick segmental arches except three on the front which have plain masonry lintels. A continuous masonry sill runs under all windows except three on front which have lug sills.

At the top of the exterior walls on all sides except rear, there is a tumbling-type brickwork frieze. Above the brickwork frieze near the northwest corner of the front wall, the date "1908" and name of the builder "ESCOE" is in raised relief. Above the date and name, the top of the wall is adorned with crenellation-type features.

Although some of the doors have been changed and the red brick exterior was recently painted a light grey color, the integrity of the nominated property has remained intact for almost 75 years.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) (Ethnic)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1908-1933 **Builder/Architect** W. T. Escoe (Builder)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Escoe (Simmons) Building is significant for several reasons: (1) from 1908 to 1919 it housed the first black-owned bank in Oklahoma, the Peoples Bank and Trust Company, (2) it was the first and only professional office building in Muskogee's black business district, and (3) its historic association with the J.J. Simmons Royalty Company, the first major petroleum firm in Oklahoma to be owned and operated by a black family.

Established in 1908, the Peoples Bank and Trust Company was the first black-owned bank in the new state of Oklahoma which was admitted to the Union in 1907. Founded by W. T. Escoe, one of the pioneer businessmen in Muskogee's black community, the bank was housed on the first floor of the nominated property. Escoe and L.F. Fue served on the bank's board of directors and J. E. Johnson was cashier. The bank provided the necessary financial services for the merchants and residents of Muskogee's black community for approximately ten years.

From 1908 to the present, the second floor of the Escoe Building has provided office space for a variety of black professionals including physicians, attorneys, and dentists. It was the first and only professional office building for Muskogee's black population. For many years, Cecil Robertson maintained his law office in the building prior to his appointment as the first black Assistant United States District Attorney in 1964.

During the peak of Oklahoma's petroleum boom era from 1910-1925, J. J. "Jake" Simmons obtained leases on a number of petroleum producing properties in northeastern Oklahoma. Simmons became the first black in Oklahoma to own and operate a petroleum firm, the Simmons Royalty Company. In 1940 J. J. Simmons purchased the Escoe Building and for the past 42 years he and his two sons have maintained their main office on the second floor. Forbes Magazine issue of August 30, 1982 recognized the Simmons Royalty Company as one of the foremost black-owned petroleum companies in the United States. The company owns extensive leases in Nigeria and have been recognized by three American Presidents for their role in the international petroleum production business.

The Escoe (Simmons) Building stands today as one of the few remaining black-owned commercial buildings in Muskogee's once historic black business district located in the 200-300 blocks of North Second Street. Isom's Furniture and Antiques currently occupies the first floor. The second floor offices presently house the Simmons Royalty Company, Dr. Robert C. Smith, a black physician, and Cousin Kimble, a black attorney.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Forbes Magazine, August 30, 1982. Article on the Simmons Royalty Company.

Smith, Betty, "Historic Simmons Building Sought For State Employee's Parking Lot,"
Muskogee Phoenix, July, 1981.

Continued

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Southeast Muskogee, OK

Quadrangle scale 7.5"

UTM References

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2	8	5	8	0	0
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3	9	5	8	5	6	0
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Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 1, Block 4, Original Townsite of Muskogee, Oklahoma.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Claudia Craig supervised by Dr. George O. Carney

organization Northeast Oklahoma Counties Survey

date January, 1983

street & number Stillwater

telephone Oklahoma

city or town

state

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

C. E. Metcalf

5/31/83

title

date

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date

7/14/83

J. P. Allard Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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Continuation sheet Major Bibliographical Ref. Item number 9

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Franklin, Jimmie Lewis, The Blacks in Oklahoma. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980, p. 28

Interview with Celeste Johnson, Director, Martin Luther King, Jr. Center, Muskogee, OK, December, 1982.

Interview with Donald Simmons, January, 1983.

West, C. W., Muskogee: From Statehood to Pearl Harbor. Muskogee: Muskogee Publishing Co., 1976, p. 35.