

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC **WHEELOCK ACADEMY**

AND/OR COMMON
Wheelock Academy

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER **East of Millerton and 1.5 miles north of U.S. 70**
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN **Millerton** VICINITY OF _____ CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT _____

STATE **Oklahoma** CODE **40** COUNTY **McCurtain** CODE **089**

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 type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY (See continuation sheet)

NAME **Chief, Choctaw Tribal Council (Claude David Gardner)**

STREET & NUMBER **P.O. Box 33**

CITY, TOWN **Muskogee** VICINITY OF _____ STATE **Oklahoma 74401**

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. **County Clerk**

STREET & NUMBER **Drawer C**

CITY, TOWN **Idabee** STATE **Oklahoma 74745**

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE **None**

DATE _____
 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN _____ STATE _____

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Wheelock Academy is located in a wooded area of McCurtain county approximately three miles east of Millerton, Oklahoma and a distance of 1.5 miles north of U.S. Route 70 on a secondary road. The academy is owned by the Choctaw Nation and is administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Since the school closed in 1955, the buildings have suffered gross neglect. Though the grounds are very well kept, i.e., the grass was neatly trimmed and there were no signs of abandonment, considerable deterioration of historic structures has occurred and vegetation has excessively overgrown some of the buildings.

As indicated on the USGS 7.5' series map, for Garvin, Oklahoma, dated 1951, four years before the close of Wheelock Academy, there were a number of structures located on the premises. This condition has changed. There are three residences on the east side of the access road but they appear to be 20th century structures and are not a part of the original campus. Nor do they contribute to the national significance of the landmark. There are presently six of the original institutional buildings still standing at Wheelock Academy. These include:

The Old Seminary (photograph no. 1 and no. 2) constructed as the first of the buildings built after the destruction of the campus by fire. It is a two story structure with three wings. There is a tower which rises above the south facade. Built of wood, the seminary seems in good structural condition though the porch on the south side, added to the seminary during the 1940's, is collapsing. Correspondingly, on the north side of the building is a modern addition dating from this same period. This section, like the porch, was constructed poorly and the roof has a severe leakage problem causing damage to the interior.

The Dining Hall (photograph no. 3) sits just west of the Old Seminary facing east. It is a one story frame structure on a raised brick foundation. There are windows which completely encircle the building. There are double doors which enter into a small foyer. This building appears in very sound condition and the roof appears to be a relatively recent improvement.

The Old Barn (photograph no. 4) is in very bad repair. Located to the northeast of the Old Seminary, the barn is a two story frame building. It appears to have had a gable roof, though the uppermost section is completely gone. On the exterior, boards are falling from the walls of the building and the windows have been knocked out. The building is on the verge of being completely lost to the ravages of the elements.

The Chapel (Church) (photograph no. 5) is a one story building fashioned of rubble stone. The Church sits some distance from the main campus just north, across the street, of the cemetery. The Church is very well kept and appears to be the only building that is still in use at the academy.

(continued)

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1832

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Alfred Wright

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Wheelock Academy is the archetype for the tribal school system established by the Five Civilized Tribes in Indian Territory. As the first national academy founded under the Choctaw Nation's Act of 1842, Wheelock set precedent for some 35 academies and seminaries maintained by the Five Tribes. Even the Cherokee National Male and Female Seminaries, though administered in a different manner, were modelled after Wheelock in terms of educational purpose. This purpose was to speed the Indians' adaptation to the dominant white culture--a conscious policy decision of the Five Tribes, based on the conviction that survival depended upon emulation. It must be emphasized that these academies were not mission schools, nor Government schools. They were national schools, paid for and controlled by the Councils of the Five Tribes. They satisfied Indian needs, and being liberally endowed, they attracted qualified teachers and acquired high academic excellence. Considered as prime vehicles of acculturation, they are unique in American Indian history, for the Indians themselves sponsored the schools and they were not imposed. Considered solely as educational institutions they are, again, unique, for at a time when the typical mission or Government Indian school hoped, at best, to inculcate rudimentary literacy and simple vocational skills, the academies of the Five Tribes carried out a sophisticated academic program that produced educated citizens and skilled leaders for societies distinguished by the presence of libraries, newspapers and constitutional self-government. Teachers from leading Eastern colleges and universities--Princeton, Dartmouth, Harvard, Vassar--gave instruction in natural philosophy, algebra, astronomy, history and Greek and Latin. The councils financed college educations in the East for promising academy graduates. The success of the Five Tribes in achieving first class citizenship in Oklahoma can be traced to this commitment to education. The national academies, first of which was Wheelock were the instruments of this success.

Wheelock Academy is still owned by the Choctaw and is administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Though the school is no longer open, several residences are located nearby and the grounds are maintained by local Indians. The academy is located three miles east of Millerton, Oklahoma.

HISTORY

Wheelock began as a mission school, established in 1832 by Reverend Alfred Wright. A graduate of Williams College and Andover Theological Seminary, Wright was missionary to the Choctaws from 1853 until his death in 1889. He named the

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"About Some of Our First Schools in Choctaw Nation," Chronicles of Oklahoma, VOL. VI.
 "Choctaw-Wheelock Academy," file in Indian Archives Division, Oklahoma Historical Society.
 Foreman, Grant. The Five Civilized Tribes, (Norman, 1934).
 ----- Advancing the Frontier, (Norman, 1933).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 35
 UTM REFERENCES

* As indicated on the USGS 7.5' series map, Garvin, Oklahoma Quadrangle, there is no numerical zone listed, only reference to zone is stated in South Zone.

*A

5	5	3	1	6	6	2	0	3	7	6	3	0	1	0
ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING								

B

5	5	3	1	6	3	7	0	3	7	6	2	6	3	0
ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING								

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Joseph Scott Mendinghall, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

(202) 523-5464

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street, N.W.

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington, D.C. 20240

Landmark

Designated:

Dec. 7, 1965

date

Boundary Established:

Oct. 17, 1978

date

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

4/7/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

(Handwritten notes at bottom)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

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Mr. Abe Lincoln
Facilities Management
Muskogee Area Office
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Muskogee, Oklahoma 74401

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The Domestic Science Building (photograph no. 3) is located to the northeast (behind) the Old Seminary. The structure is a one and one half story building with gabled roof. On the west side of the building there is an elongated dormer. The building is constructed of logs and has a stone foundation. There is a stone chimney on the south side of the building with stones laid in an irregular ashlar fashion. On the west side of the building is a porch with stone columns which match the stone work of the chimney. These columns support the extended roofline. The building appears sound though access is hampered by the growth of trees and foliage.

The Arts and Crafts Building (photograph no. 7) sits also behind the Old Seminary. Close examination of the property was impossible as it had been completely overgrown. It is known, however, that the building was constructed of logs and stone and was of similar design as the Domestic Science Building.

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school after Eleazar Wheelock, founder of Moor's Indian School, later to become known as Dartmouth College. It was Wright who reduced the Choctaw language to writing and published some 60 books in that tongue.

When the Choctaws passed the National Education Act of 1842,¹ which provided for a system of national academies and seminaries, Wheelock was chosen as the prototype institution. Wright was hired to run the school and recruit the teachers. This contract system between tribe and missionary was also adopted by the Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles--the Cherokees, however, administered their schools directly.

In 1832, shortly after the Choctaws of the Six Towns had traversed the Trail of Tears from Mississippi to Indian Territory, their missionary and friend, Alfred Wright, founded Wheelock Mission on its present site. Though the strange land and decimating epidemics caused great hardship, the mission and school soon prospered. By 1839 Wright was forced to expand the school plant, building a large two story frame dormitory to accommodate the influx of boarding students. Because the Wheelock school was already established, it was selected to become the first Choctaw national academy in 1842. Within a year of the academy's founding, Capt. William Armstrong, Superintendent of the Choctaw Agency, could report that Wheelock was a model for Indian education, its curriculum providing a judicious blend of cultural uplift and practical skills. He lauded Reverend and Mrs. Wright for their excellent management of the school.

Aware that they were participating in an historical advance of the frontier, the Choctaws in 1845 decided to build a permanent church to memorialize the bringing of civilization to the West. One year later they dedicated the stone church that still stands 200 yards from the academy. They honored Reverend Wright by engraving on a tablet embedded in the east wall his still legible motto: "Jehovah Jireh"--The Lord Will Provide.

Wright died in 1853 and was buried in the church cemetery. Many noted teachers followed him at Wheelock, including John Edwards, John Libby, and Miss Mary J. Semple--for 40 years teacher and counselor of Choctaws.

Civil War disrupted Indian Territory and Wheelock Academy suffered temporary eclipse. Reinstated after the war, it was all but destroyed by fire in 1869.

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1. This was the first such law among the Five Tribes. It was the outgrowth of a concern for education among the Choctaws that dated back to 1803. In 1820 the Choctaw Council voted to use all Government annuities for schools.

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For some years instruction was carried on in the gutted church and the few damaged buildings that remained.

With the help of the Southern Presbyterian Church, the Choctaws rebuilt Wheelock Academy in the years 1880-84. The main structure of the new plant was the Seminary. Ensuing years saw a number of changes in the formal arrangements for administration of the Academy, changes involving both the Presbyterian Home Mission Board and the U.S. Government. But until 1932, Wheelock remained a tribal school, supported and ultimately controlled by the Choctaws. With the centennial celebration that year, Wheelock became a regular United States Indian School. After 123 years of service to the Choctaw people, the Wheelock school merged with Jones Academy near Hartshorne in 1955 and the school was closed.

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Verbal boundary
CONTINUATION SHEET description ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

Beginning at the intersection of the Academy's access road and a dirt road, proceed along the east side of the access road until it comes to an end; thence northeast 350', more or less, to the 460' contour line; thence follow said contour line indicated on the USGS map around Wheelock Academy to a point of intersection with a dirt secondary road located just below the academy; thence east along the north side of said road to the point of origin.

The boundary encompasses the six extant buildings and the foundations of once standing buildings.