

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAY 24 1984

date entered JUN 22 1984

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

1. Name

historic Black Theater of Ardmore

and/or common Metropolitan A.M.E. Church

2. Location

street & number 536 East Main St. N/A not for publication

city, town Ardmore N/A vicinity of

state Oklahoma code 40 county Carter code 019

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input 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	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Metropolitan A.M.E. Church

street & number 800 3rd N.E.

city, town Ardmore N/A vicinity of state Oklahoma 73402

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number Carter County Courthouse

city, town Ardmore state Oklahoma 73402

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1983 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Oklahoma City state Oklahoma 73105

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Black Theatre is a 34' x 62', detached, two story building. It is constructed of red brick which is laid in the running bond. A stepped parapet runs along the outer edges of the flat roof.

The parapet along the north side of the building has a raised central portion, extending approximately five feet above the main parapet line. Below the parapet is a freize, made up of a row of toothing bricks and a row of brick dentils. The front entrance door is a double wooden door with fixed gothic pointed arch door lights and two fixed transom lights above. Either side of the door is a 1/1 double hung, wooden framed sash window with a sill constructed out of rowlock laid bricks. Above the door and windows is a row of twelve fixed pane window lights. On the second story of the front of the building are two 1/1 double-hung, wooden-framed, sash-type windows.

The west side of the building has three windows on the first story. These windows are of the 1/1, double-hung, wooden-framed, sash type. A single window on the second story has been bricked in. The rear or south side of the building also has three bricked-in windows. There are two windows still used on the first story. These windows have wooden frames and are 1/1, double hung, sash-type windows. There are three iron ventilator grilles at the rear end, two at the roof line and one at ground level.

The east side of the building has a double, wooden framed and panelled door with three transom lights above. On the first story are three, wooden framed, 1/1 double hung sash windows. The second story has three fixed pane wooden framed windows.

Although the ticket window area in facade as well as several windows have been bricked, red brick similar to the original materials were used. The integrity of the building remains intact despite these minor alterations.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input 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 1922-1944

Builder/Architect Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Black Theater Building is historically significant because: (1) it is the oldest all-black commercial structure of its type in Ardmore and one of the oldest still intact in Oklahoma, and (2) it is one of the few remaining all-black commercial buildings still standing in Ardmore which was associated with its black business district.

Ardmore was established in 1887 as a rail outlet for agricultural products when the Santa Fe extended its tracks across the Chickasaw Nation, Indian Territory. With the coming of the railroad, this largely undeveloped area was soon occupied by ranches and farms where cotton and cattle were preeminent activities. The Chickasaws, like the other four nations of the Five Civilized Tribes, had brought to Indian Territory their black slaves from the southeastern United States. Hence most of the ranches and farms were operated by Chickasaw owners, but farmed by their black slaves. Following the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution and the Emancipation Proclamation, black slaves of the Chickasaws were given their freedom and most were allotted acreage in Indian Territory.

Ardmore's population grew slowly from 1887 to 1910 when it reached 8,618. It was the principal trading center for south central Oklahoma and had developed a thriving cotton processing and storage industry. During the early 1900s blacks from the rural areas had migrated to Ardmore seeking employment and a sizeable black community of 1,628 population (18.9 percent of Ardmore's total) had emerged by 1910. Associated with the growth of Ardmore's black population was the establishment of several black-owned and operated businesses. According to Franklin's 1982 history of blacks in Oklahoma, Ardmore was one of four towns outside Oklahoma City and Tulsa which developed its own black business district which included a barber shop, cafe, a grocery, a blacksmith shop, a rooming house, and a variety of other businesses. By 1920 Ardmore's black population had increased to 2,008, or roughly 14.2 percent of Ardmore's 14,181 total population.

To serve the social and entertainment needs of Ardmore's black community of more than 2,000, an all-black theater (movie-house) was built in ca. 1922. It was located in the 500 block of East Main in the area of other black businesses and near the black residential area.

Within the next twenty years, migration from the state, especially in the Depression era years of the 1930s, and movement to larger urban centers such as Oklahoma City took its toll on the all-black community of Ardmore. Most of the black businesses ceased operations and were either destroyed or allowed to stand vacant and deteriorate.

The All-Black Theater Building survived until ca. 1944 when it was purchased by one of the all-black churches, the Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal.

For approximately twenty years, the Ardmore Black Theater served an important role in the ethnic history of the community. During a period of racial separatism, the property provided a valuable service to those excluded from white establishments of similar function and it stands as a significant monument to the once-thriving black business district of Ardmore--the only commercial building of its type which remains intact.

9. Major Bibliographical References

John Black, Personal Interview, July, 1983.
J.H. Lasley, Personal Interview, July, 1983.
C.R. Smith, Personal Interview, July, 1983.
W.H. Hightower, Personal Interview, July, 1983.

Franklin, Jimmie Lewis, Journey
Toward Hope: A History of
Blacks in Oklahoma. Norman:
University of Oklahoma Press, 1982.

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Ardmore East, OK

1:24,000

Quadrangle scale 7.5 minutes

UTM References

A

1	4	6	7	3	0	3	0	3	7	8	2	4	4	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 12-14, Block 388, Original Townsite of Ardmore, OK

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 Bryan Brown Supervised by Dr. George Carney

organization Department of Geography

date February, 1984

street & number Oklahoma State University

telephone 405-624-6250

city or town Stillwater

state Oklahoma 74078

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. Metcalf

5-21-84

title

date

For NPS use only

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

for Beth Grosvenor
Keeper of the National Register

date

6/22/84

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration