

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. Name of Property

historic name Bridgeport Hill Service Station

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number NW corner, Old Route 66 and U.S. 281 Spur not for publication
city or town Geary vicinity x
state Oklahoma code OK county Canadian code 017
zip code 73014

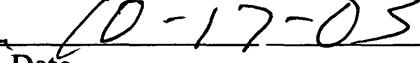
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Bridgeport Hill Service Station
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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (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:

entered in the National Register

See continuation sheet.

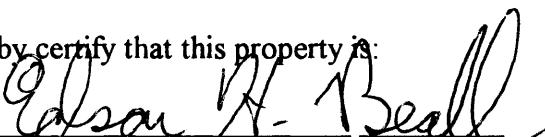
determined eligible for the
National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the
National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain): _____

  12/5/03

 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>2</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u>1</u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</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.) Route 66 & Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: COMMERCE / TRADE Sub: specialty store

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: VACANT / NOT IN USE Sub: _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: House and Canopy Service Station

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

roof METAL: Tin

walls — WOOD: Weatherboard

METAL: Tin; CONCRETE: Concrete block

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)

COMMERCE _____

Period of Significance 1934-1953

Significant Dates 1934 _____

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
____ N/A _____

Cultural Affiliation ____ N/A _____

Architect/Builder ____ Tilley, Leroy, Builder _____

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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than five acres _____

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

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15	248580E	3993448N	3	_____
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

____ 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 August 4, 2003

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)

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Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Kevin and Cynthia Mills

street & number Rural Route 5, Box 125 D telephone

city or town Weatherford state OK zip code 73096

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Bridgeport Hill Service Station

Canadian County, Oklahoma

Description

SUMMARY

The Bridgeport Hill Service Station is a group of three buildings located slightly to the east of the crest of a high hill overlooking the South Canadian River valley. Bridgeport Hill, famous in local lore and in the odyssey of many travelers along Route 66 because of its steep west-slope incline that challenged the horsepower and condition of their automobiles and trucks, is a prominent feature in the landscape in this part of western Oklahoma that is otherwise increasingly flat and open. A 1946 tour guide of Route 66 describes this area as " 'short grass' range country, the first indication of the vast Texas plains to come," a description which still conveys an accurate impression of the topography. From the site near the crest of the hill where the Bridgeport Hill Service Station is located, a commanding view of the countryside to the east and south makes the location especially attractive. Constructed by the P.D. and Joseph Tilley families in 1934, the station and its related buildings are modest structures located high on the hill that in another quarter mile slopes to the west dramatically as Route 66 descends to the South Canadian River and from there moves on west to the historic oases of Hinton Junction and then Hydro farther west. Because this section of Route 66 has been bypassed, first by Interstate 40 about two miles to the south, and then recently by an alternative route of U.S. 281 between Geary and Hydro that avoids the steep hill by passing it to the north and intersecting with U.S. 281 Spur that connects with the interstate. U.S. 281 Spur now passes to the east of the station. The combination of new roads has left the 1.5 mile stretch that passes in front of the Bridgeport Hill gas station seldom traveled, although modern truck traffic especially travels the spur route on the east.

The nominated property that was known as the Bridgeport Hill Service Station and also Tilley Gas Station, includes the station itself, an adjacent well house located directly to the east and set back from the front of the gas station, and a repair and service garage located to the west and set back. In addition, outside of the boundaries of the nomination, a concrete pad north of the service garage appears to have once supported an auxiliary structure, likely storage for lubricants or other materials, and another structure situated far to the northwest remains; that structure is a long rectangular gabled roof supported by poles to provide shelter for automobiles. A residence is located to the north of the

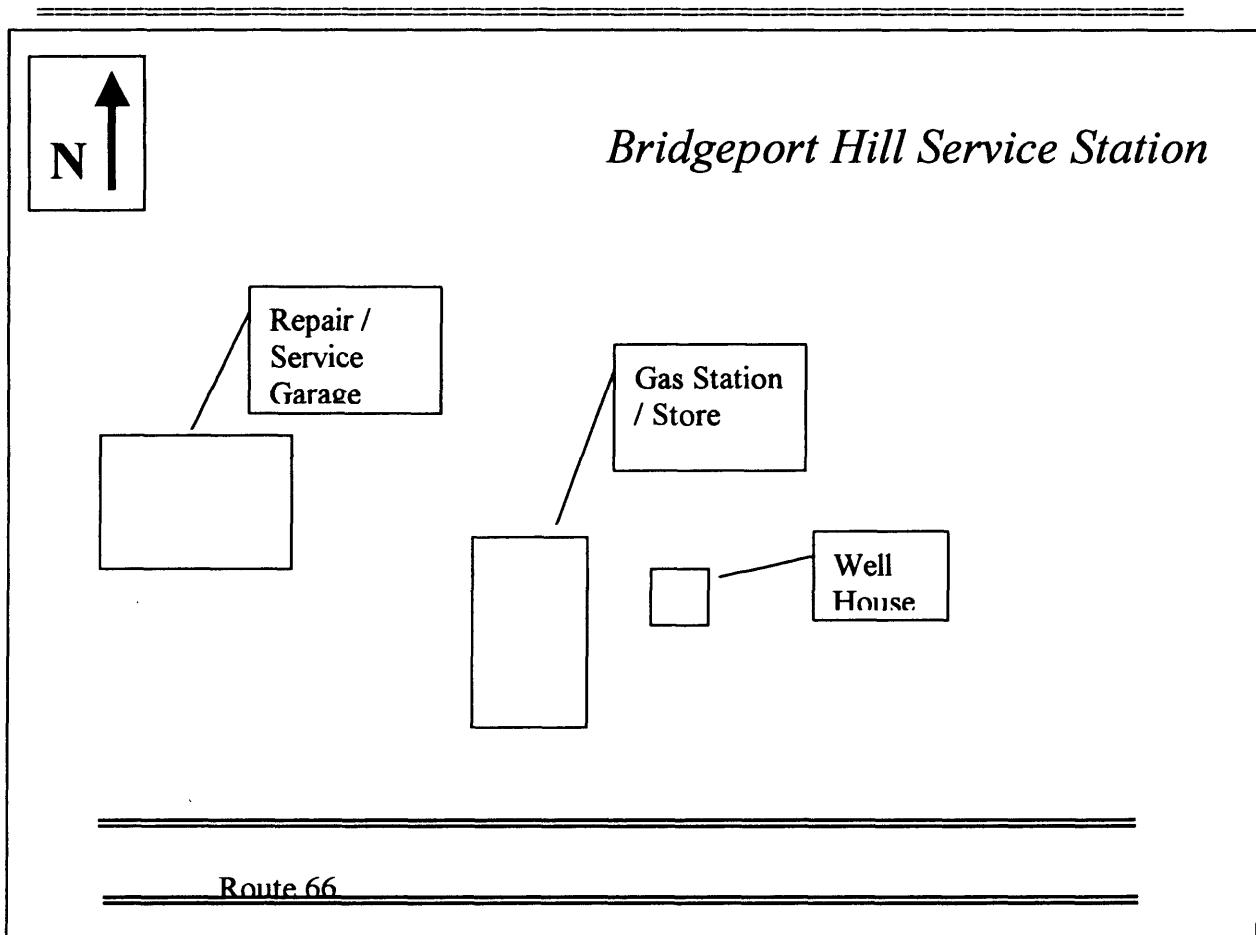
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gasoline station / store. It has been altered in recent years. The residence, the pole shelter, and the concrete pad are not directly associated with commerce on Route 66 and have been excluded from the nomination boundaries. The residence is currently occupied, but the other buildings are now vacant and unused.

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Bridgeport Hill Service Station

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Feature 1: Gasoline Station / Store

The station faces Route 66, the original roadbed located thirty-five feet south of the building, thus placing the structure at the edge of the right of way. The gas station is a simple rectangular building constructed of wooden planks with a metal gable roof that projects over the south elevation out to the pump island to form a canopy for the service lane between the front of the building and the pumps. The typology for this arrangement is referred to as a "house and canopy" by Thomas Sclereth and later by Jakle and Scully in their works describing the evolution of service stations.

The south elevation includes the service area and the porte cochere. A single door entrance opens in the center of the elevation and is flanked by a double-hung window on each side. The gable projects to the south and is supported at its outside corners by tubular steel supports anchored in fifty gallon oil drums filled with concrete—a conventional system of support for such stations. The gable is enclosed although the ceiling of the interior is not. A row of ceramic insulators across the lowest member of the planks in the gable stretches across the full width of the front to provide electricity (the wires extant) to the lights no longer present. The gasoline pump island in this station lacks the modernity of other stations, but in so doing provides an uncommon glimpse into the earlier form of construction. The island is a concrete slab flush with the ground, with stubs of steel pipe rising from the underground storage tank. The lanes on either side of the island are unpaved.

The west elevation indicates clearly the slope of the terrain from north gently down to the south and the elevation contains two now-boarded windows. Paired electrical wires emerge from inside the building near the north corner and proceed under the eaves—an indication that possibly electricity was installed soon after the time of construction of the gas station.

The south elevation, or back, of the building contains a doorless entry on the west and a double-hung window in the center covered with sheet metal to protect the interior. Gaping holes along the bottom planks diminish the condition of the building, if not the integrity. The east elevation includes a double-hung window and door (which opens to the room in the back of the store).

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Feature 2: Well House

East of the gas station and store is a nearly square concrete block building which contains the water well that served the station. This is a simple structure without windows and with a slightly sloping, gabled, metal roof. On a concrete slab in front of the entrance to the building on its west elevation the inscription reads "DRILLED BY LEROY TILLEY, OCTOBER 12, 1934 DEPTH 77 FT." A corrugated metal door seals the building. There are no windows.

Feature 3: Service Garage

The service garage where automobile repairs took place is located directly to the west of the station / store, and is set back slightly. This building is a rectangular metal structure with a flat roof that slopes to the north and a concrete foundation. The south elevation, facing Route 66, includes a swinging overhead door at the vehicle entrance on the east side, with concrete drive leading to it. A series of windows, now sealed with sheet metal, provided light across the remainder of the elevation. The west elevation includes a similar vehicle entrance on its south extreme. The north elevation contains no doors or windows, and the east elevation contains a single door pedestrian entrance and two large windows that have been sealed with sheet metal.

The Bridgeport Hill Service Station is in a condition that shows the seven decades that have lapsed since its construction, a good number of years of which it has been neglected. The station and its associated structures, however, retain their core and possess integrity of location, design, materials, appearance, workmanship, feeling, and association.

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Canadian County, Oklahoma

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

The Bridgeport Hill Gas Station, operated by the Joseph and P.D. Tilley families, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and is significant within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Route 66 & Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma." Constructed about 1934, this building served as a gasoline station and grocery store along Route 66 during its period of historic significance until 1962 when Interstate 40 replaced Route 66 as the main travel artery in the area. The building is significant under Criterion A because it represents the property type, "Gasoline / Service Stations / Garages" in the area of significance of Commerce on Route 66.

Historical Background

When Route 66 originally passed through this area of western Oklahoma between El Reno and Hydro in 1926, it followed a meandering loop that reached to the north, connecting the small towns of Calumet, Geary, and Bridgeport where a toll bridge provided one of only a few opportunities for travelers to cross the South Canadian River. That road lay far from the remote location where this gasoline station would be built, but alterations in the road alignment ultimately brought the highway to this point. As with the highway in other parts of the state and nation, this route was generally unpaved and was considerably longer than a straight-line path west from El Reno. Moreover, the dependence on the private toll bridge caused an awkward situation for those traveling this main artery of national commerce. From the beginning, then, the Oklahoma Highway Department sought an alternate route, one that would be much more direct.

The key to this alternate route was the construction of a new bridge—a free, public bridge—over the South Canadian. When finally that bridge was constructed, between 1932 and 1934, its opening was still delayed until road construction west of the river could be completed. Even before the bridge was completed, however, the section of highway to the east was completed in almost record time and was open for traffic. Construction started in

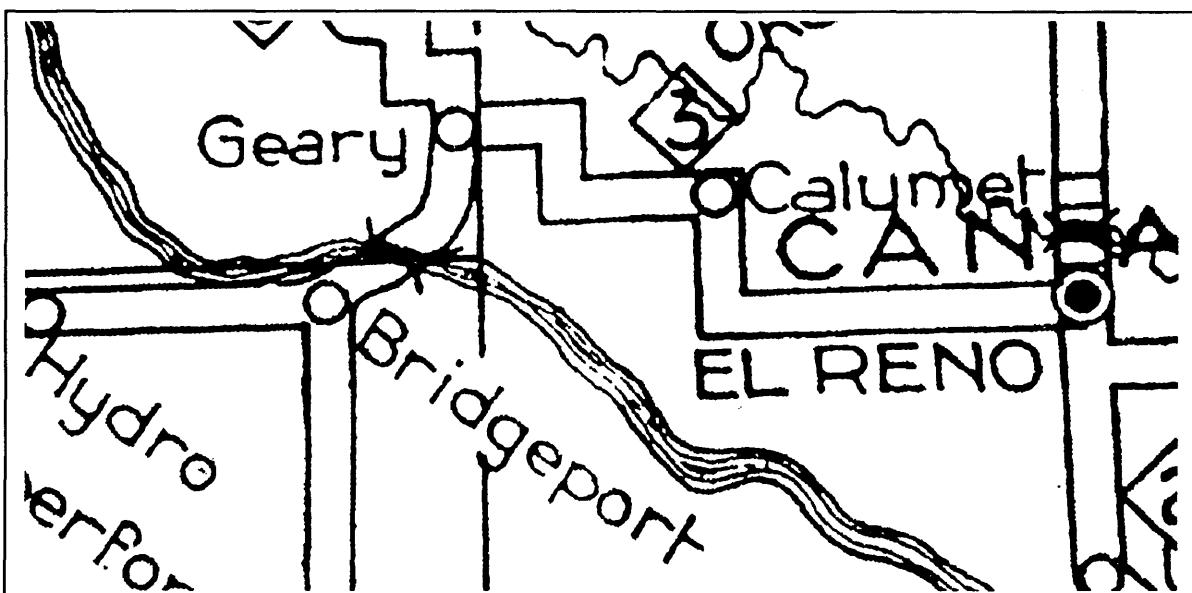
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Highway west from El Reno to Bridgeport and Hydro before the construction of the El Reno Cutoff. This map section is taken from "Oklahoma State Highway System," 1925 which shows the Postal Road, Highway 3, which became route 66 in 1926. Courtesy Oklahoma Department of Transportation.

in November of the same year.¹ Because of construction delays and litigation, the full length of the road and the bridge did not open for traffic until the summer of 1934.²

¹ El Reno Daily Tribune, July 14, 21, 29, August 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 29, September 11, October 7, 13, November 21, 1932.

² Anderson, Kathy, Jim Ross, and Gary Ray Howell, Oklahoma Route 66 Association, *Oklahoma Route 66 Roadbed Documentation Project (1926-1970): A Survey of Roadbed and Integral Structures* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma SHPO, 2002), 25.

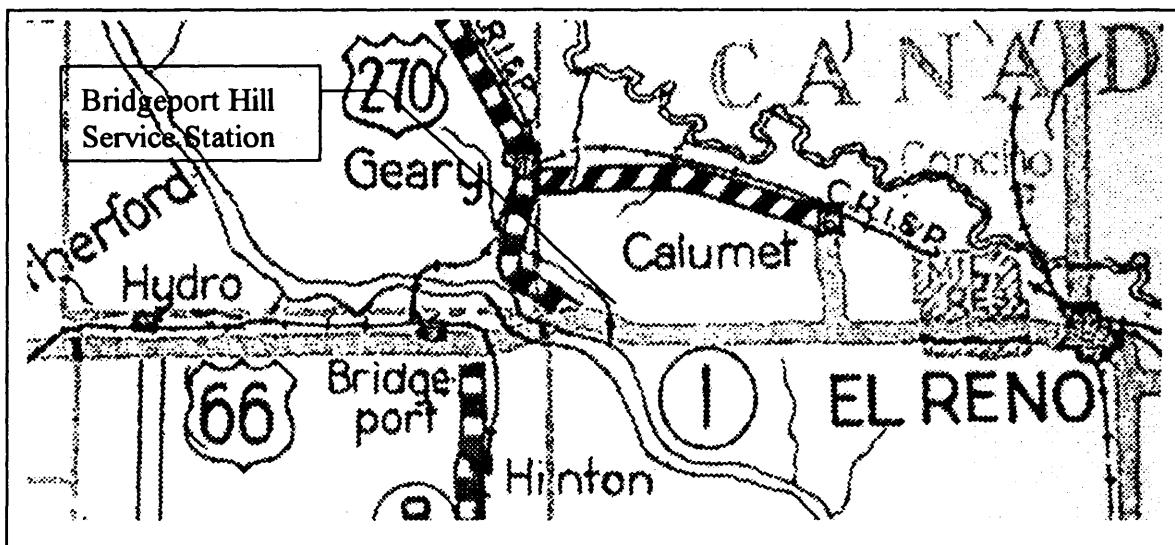
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Route 66, from El Reno to Bridgeport and Hydro, indicating El Reno Cutoff which bypassed Calumet and Geary in 1934. Dashed roads are unpaved. Courtesy Oklahoma Department of Transportation.

One of the farmers along this stretch of road was Joseph S. Tilley. Tilley had moved from Kansas to homestead a farm on the hill overlooking the South Canadian River valley around the turn of the century. He was joined in 1909 by his brother Denton, or P.D., and his family, and the two Tilleys went into partnership to operate the farm. Denton's son Leroy (also called Roy) helped his father and uncle farm.

In 1932 the state of Oklahoma secured an easement from Joseph S. Tilley for the purpose of constructing this new road, an allowance that Tilley granted using his brother P.D. as his agent. The Tilleys took advantage of the opportunity and soon constructed a gasoline station. With water being an essential for the operation of the station, nephew Leroy Tilley drilled a well adjacent to the building and hit water at a depth of seventy-seven feet on October 12, 1934—an effective date for marking the operation of the station on the new road.

This conjunction of new road construction and the opening of the gas station reveals at least two elements of social history developed in the historic context—(1) the rise of small

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businesses with minimal capital along the road in a way that supplanted or supplemented the previous main economic activity of the residents and (2) the ability of those with land to move into a business that provided an alternative or supplement to the agricultural activity. In this case, the shift from farming to commercial, retail business activity represented a significant alteration, and indeed may reflect the way at least one farming family, in an area where the countryside was being depopulated by economic and natural forces, managed to stay on the land.

It is not clear when the repair garage was added to the station, but speculation is that it was added shortly after the station began operation. This would also be the pattern elsewhere in the area and along Route 66. During the years that Route 66 passed 35 feet from its pumps, its location was prime, both as a point at which west-bound travelers girded themselves for crossing the plains—more arid, less populated, and sometimes intimidating thereby—and as a point at which east-bound travelers who had laboriously climbed the Bridgeport Hill paused for repairs or refreshment, and to let their automobiles cool.

In 1946 Jack Rittenhouse noted the presence of the gas station at the top of the hill, although he made no observations of its operation or appearance beyond “small groceries at these gas stations.”³ This station continued, presumably with Leroy Tilley bearing the responsibility for its operations, serving the traffic along Route 66 probably until the new interstate highway passed about two miles south of the station on Route 66 in 1962. That road caused a dramatic shift in transportation patterns and most cars and trucks traveled the divided, four-lane road. Few stations were able to survive that loss of traffic, and those usually claimed a particular advantage, such as being adjacent to the interstate. Joseph Tilley left the property to Roy when he died, and Roy’s widow continued living on

³ Jack D. Rittenhouse, *A Guide Book to Highway 66* (Los Angeles: privately published, 1946; reprint, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989, 2000), 57.

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the land at least until 1987.

Summary

Because of this direct association with Route 66 during the period of its historic significance, the gas station on Bridgeport Hill is significant under Criterion A within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Route 66 & Associated Historic Resources in Oklahoma" as the property type "Gasoline / Service Stations." It is an excellent example of a private, entrepreneurial service station created to take advantage of the newly-located US Highway 66. As such, it is eligible under Criterion A, for its commercial significance on Route 66.

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Major Bibliographical References

Anderson, Kathy, Jim Ross, and Gary Ray Howell, Oklahoma Route 66 Association, *Oklahoma Route 66 Roadbed Documentation Project (1926-1970): A Survey of Roadbed and Integral Structures* (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma SHPO, 2002).

Canadian County History Book Association, *Family Histories of Canadian County Oklahoma* (n.p.: 1987).

El Reno *Daily Tribune*, July 14, 21, 29, August 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 29, September 11, October 7, 13, November 21, 1932.

Office of the Canadian County Clerk, property records.

Rittenhouse, Jack D., *A Guide Book to Highway 66* (Los Angeles: privately published, 1946; reprint, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989, 2000).

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Bridgeport Hill Service Station

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Verbal Boundary Description

This property is located in the NW, NE, NE ¼ Section 5, T12N, R10W and consists of the three contributing features and is defined as including the area one hundred feet north of the roadbed of old Route 66 for a distance of one hundred fifty feet west along that roadbed beginning at a point fifty feet east of the station.

Boundary Justification

This boundary includes the property historically associated with the commercial activities of the Bridgeport Hill Service Station.