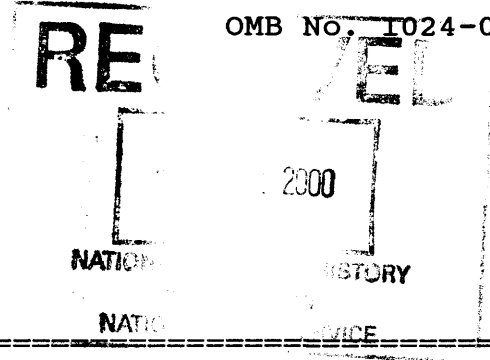


NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

OMB No. 1024-0018



=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name El Reno High School

other names/site number N/A

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 405 S. Choctaw not for publication N/A  
city or town El Reno vicinity N/A  
state Oklahoma code OK county Canadian code 017  
zip code 73036

3. State/Federal 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.)

Bob Blachman 1-24-2000  
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): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall 3/3/00

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper Date  
of Action

---

---

5. Classification

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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>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>5</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: EDUCATION Sub: school

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: EDUCATION Sub: school

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS--Late Gothic Revival

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

roof ASPHALT

walls BRICK

other STONE--trim

\_\_\_\_\_

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.)

- N/A  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)

EDUCATION  
ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1912-1949  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

=====  
8. Statement of Significance (Continued)  
=====

Significant Dates 1911  
1912  
1926

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

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Layton, Solomon, and Smith, S. Wemyss--architects  
Lee, L. F.--builder  
Scoubey, A. E.--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) N/A  
 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 one (1) acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>14</u>	<u>594840</u>	<u>3932120</u>	3	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>
2	<u>N/A</u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	4	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>

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 Dianna Everett Public Historian

organization Consultant to Preservation El Reno, Inc. Date 15 September 1999

street & number 2510 Countrywood Lane telephone 4-5-348-4272

city or town Edmond state OK zip code 73003

Property Owner

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

name El Reno Public Schools

street & number 401 N. Choctaw telephone 405-262-4070

city or town El Reno state OK zip code 73036

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SUMMARY:

El Reno High School, located at 405 S. Choctaw in El Reno, Oklahoma, is a two and one-half story, horizontally massed, detached building (two stories over raised basement). Measuring 175 feet east-west and 132 feet north-south, the building is oriented in an east-west direction, with the main (1911) entrance facing west on S. Choctaw. The school is located in a mixed-use area, with residential areas to west and southwest, and commercial areas to north and east. The El Reno High School building was constructed in two phases. The west half, or El Reno High School proper, constructed in 1911, was designed by the Oklahoma City firm of Layton and Smith, Oklahoma's premier architects and designers of the Oklahoma State Capitol Building as well as many public schools. The east half, originally built for junior high school classes, was designed by an unknown architect and was constructed in 1925-26. In style, the El Reno High School building incorporates many of the elements of Late Gothic Revival as applied to public buildings around the turn of the twentieth century. In some quarters this stylistic variation was known as "Collegiate Gothic." The major features of this variety of Late Gothic Revival, as illustrated in the El Reno High School Building, include: Flat roof with raised, shaped, and/or castellated parapet; towers with long, narrow "princess" windows; pinnacles rising from parapets or towers; and polychrome surfaces, or contrasting brick and stone work, with stone work forming copings, window and door hoods, arches, horizontal bands or water tables, and quoins. In general the two defining characteristics of the building were the decorative stone work and, before alteration, the windows. Bedford (Indiana) limestone creates hood moldings that accentuate the openings and bands that emphasize the horizontal massing.

Alterations include the following: Windows throughout the building were originally double-hung, with multiple lights in 9 over 9 pattern. At an unknown date these windows were removed and replaced with new units that had a pattern of horizontal lights. In 1985 these too were removed and replaced with the existing windows, which are made of bronze-colored aluminum, with five horizontal lights, of which the center opens outward at the bottom. New steel-frame doors were added on the east side in 1995, replacing original doors. New steel-frame doors were added at the west and south entrances in 1998. On the parapet of each elevation are mounted two quartz lights. In almost every window set there is a window air conditioning unit. There have been no other exterior alterations. The El Reno High School building retains sufficient integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and location to enable listing in the National



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Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, as exemplary of an important pattern of El Reno's education history, and under Criterion C, as El Reno's only example of the architectural work of Solomon A. Layton and S. Wemyss Smith, Oklahoma's premier architects.

DESCRIPTION:

El Reno High School, located at 405 S. Choctaw in El Reno, Oklahoma, is a two and one-half story, horizontally massed, detached building (two stories over raised basement). The red brick walls are load-bearing masonry; trim is of white limestone. Measuring 175 feet east-west and 132 feet north-south, the building is oriented in an east-west direction, with the main (1911) entrance facing west on S. Choctaw; a secondary (1926) entrance faces east on S. Bickford. There is a tertiary entrance (1911) facing south on W. Watts, and a basement entrance in the north elevation. The school is located in a mixed-use area. To the west and southwest, across Choctaw, is a residential area. To the immediate north and east are commercial properties and churches; further north lies downtown El Reno. To the south of the high school, across Watts, is a parking lot (formerly the site of a school building) and a 1930s grade school, now used as a high school annex. The areas further south and also further east, across Rock Island street, are residential.

The El Reno High School building was constructed in two phases. The west half, or El Reno High School proper, was designed by the Oklahoma City firm of Layton, Wemyss, and Smith and was constructed in 1911. The builder was L. F. Lee, of Oklahoma City. The east half, originally built for junior high school classes, was designed by an unknown architect and was constructed in 1925-26. The builder was A. E. Scoubey, of Guthrie, Oklahoma. The 1926 addition nearly doubled the size of the building and replicated the exterior's Late Gothic Revival, or "Collegiate Gothic" architectural features on the north and the south. On the east, however, the new entrance offered very restrained Gothic detailing and a more modern appearance, incorporating a geometrical motif reminiscent of Art Deco.

In style, the El Reno High School building incorporates many of the elements of Late Gothic Revival as applied to public buildings around the turn of the twentieth century. This stylistic variation was often called "Collegiate Gothic," illustrated on the campuses of Bryn Mawr, Princeton, Duke, and Chicago universities. While the architecture of the El Reno building is much less elaborate than these, it resembles some of the older buildings located on the

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campus of the University of Oklahoma, in Norman. Features of this variety often include: Flat roof with raised, shaped, and/or castellated parapet; towers with long, narrow "princess" windows; pinnacles rising from parapets or towers; and polychrome surfaces, or contrasting brick and stone work, with stone work forming copings, window and door hoods, arches, horizontal bands (as in a drip mold/water table), and quoins. The El Reno High School building, both 1911 and 1926 phases, offers all of these visual characteristics. In general the two defining characteristics of the building are the fenestration and the decorative stone work. All windows have four horizontal lights, many of which are painted black.

The west elevation, on Choctaw Avenue, is the most formal and is visually defined by its fenestration. This elevation has the main entrance to the original high school building. Its strongest visual element is a set of towers that flank the entry. This elevation has five bays. Each of these two outer bays projects outward three feet from the main wall and has a triangular-shaped and castellated pediment with a centrally placed pinnacle. Each of these bays has a set of three contiguous windows on each floor. Two inner bays flank the elaborated entry bay. Each of these inner bays has a five-window strip on each floor. The center, or entry, bay, is reached by a two-level set of concrete steps that rise from ground level into a segmental-arch accessing a recessed entry porch on the first floor. The entry is accentuated by a set of three windows above the arch. The windows have curved lintels that combine to form a segmental arch. A above this set of windows is an upwardly stepped, triangular-shaped pediment. The twin towers, rising above the roofline, are octagonal and have upwardly stepped caps and elongated "princess windows."

The south elevation presently has seven bays. The original building, the western portion of this wall, had four bays. The westernmost bay has a set of four contiguous windows on each floor. The second bay has a slightly projecting entry bay with a single flight of steps up from the street (a basement entrance is located under the steps, on the west side). Above the square entry is a recessed porch. Above this, each floor has a set of two contiguous windows. The roofline of this bay is marked by a triangular-shaped parapet, with a central pinnacle, and flanking castellations. The next bay to the east has a set of three contiguous windows, and the next to the east has four windows. This marks east edge of the original building. The joint between the two is covered by a metal downspout. To the east, on each floor, is a single window, marking the placement of restrooms. To the east of this, in the 1926 section of the south elevation, are three bays, each with a set of four contiguous windows on each floor. A metal

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chimney rises from the roof behind the parapet in this elevation.

The north elevation is very similar to the south elevation, with identical window placement. However, there is no first-floor entrance. A concrete ramp at the west end of this elevation leads downward to two doors that access the ground floor/raised basement. A brick chimney rises from the roof behind the parapet in this elevation.

The east elevation, facing Bickford, is the "public" entry. Constructed in 1925-26, this elevation consists of five bays, of which the central bay is the most prominent. The outer two bays, on north and south, have no windows. They are characterized by diamond-, half-diamond-, and square-shaped stone decorations inset into the wall below the parapet, and square decorations set into the wall above the water table. Vertical patterned brickwork visually connects the stone insets. The two inner bays are narrow and project slightly. Each has a recessed entry porch under a segmental arch. Each entry is accessed by a single flight of concrete steps up from the street (under each set of these steps is a basement entrance). Each entry bay has a single set of two windows above the entry, and above the windows is a small, triangular-shaped pediment with a central pinnacle. The central bay is elaborated and is distinguished by the window trim, which continues the trim style from the other elevations. Each floor has a set of five contiguous windows flanked by a two-window set. Those in the upper floor are small in size. This bay has a very broad, triangular-shaped pediment with a central pinnacle flanked two two smaller, regularly spaced pinnacles. At ground level, originally there was no access to the basement (which is the gymnasium). At an unknown date, probably in 1948 or 1974, double doors replaced two of the windows. The central bay in this elevation gives a visual indication that behind it is the large auditorium, used for both school and public presentations.

The building's other primary visual characteristic is its white stone trim, which contrasts with the red brick of the walls. Bedford (Indiana) limestone was chosen to accentuate the openings and to emphasize the horizontal massing. Stone is the major material used to form the west-side twin towers, quoins, and entry arches. Stone is used for all of the coping atop the pediment, for the pinnacles, and for the arches at the entries. All of the window lintels, sills, and facings, as well as the quoins that flank all windows, are stone. All of the second-floor windows on west, south, and east are accentuated by square, stone hood moldings. A limestone band forms the water table that separates the ground and first floor and forms the caps of the stair balustrades at all entrances. On the east

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elevation, the geometric details are stone. At the southwest corner of the 1911 section is a limestone cornerstone bearing the inscriptions: EL RENO HIGH SCHOOL/ERECTED MCMXI" and "BOARD OF EDUCATION/J A HATCHETT, PRES. EARL BEEBE/ J L PHELPS L C HICKMAN/ CHAPEN WRIGHT L N SHEPARD/THOMAS LANE/ E N HOWELL SUPT. DAYTON-MUNCELL CLK/ ARCHITECTS/ S A LAYTON & S WEMYSS-SMITH/ CONTRACTOR/ L F LEE."

Noncontributing structures include: At the southwest corner, a large pink granite block bearing the words "CLASS OF '16" and, outside the auditorium, a sign, consisting of two brick posts that support a metal mesh sign bearing the words "EL RENO/HIGH SCHOOL/HOME/OF THE/INDIANS." Set into each of the posts is a stone block bearing the words "EHS/1961." Three concrete benches sit outside the west entrance. Originally, a brick sidewalk form the periphery on west, south, and east. This appears to have been replaced with concrete in 1939, judging from an inscription bearing the words "WPA/1939" that is stamped into the concrete at the northwest corner.

The building's interior is characterized by a long, horizontal central block that is the auditorium, on first floor (with second-floor balcony); below the auditorium, at ground level (in the basement) is a gymnasium that is the same size as the auditorium. A corridor borders this block on north, west, and south, and between the corridor and the outer wall are placed classrooms of various kinds. All three levels are identical in this respect. The interior walls are concrete and fireproof. Originally, the 1911 building had a small auditorium and gym, and when the building was expanded in 1926, the corridors, classrooms, auditorium, and gym were expanded and extended to the east. Interior floors are original multi-colored, square tiles. Interior doors and facings are alike throughout the building and appear to date from the 1940s or 1950s.

ALTERATIONS:

Windows throughout the building were originally double-hung, with multiple lights in 9 over 9 pattern. At an unknown date these windows were removed and replaced with new units that had a pattern of horizontal lights. In 1985 these too were removed and replaced with the existing windows, which are made of bronze-colored aluminum, with four horizontal lights, of which the third from the top opens outward in awning style. New steel-frame doors were added on the east side in 1995, replacing original doors. New steel-frame doors were added at the west and south entrances in 1998. On the parapet of each elevation are mounted two

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quartz lights. In almost every window set there is a window air conditioning unit. There have been no other exterior alterations.

Interior alterations have been made several times. C. 1950 the basement bleachers were removed; c. 1974 west-side dressing rooms were removed to create a corridor like that on first and second floors. A 1928 gas explosion in the west wing resulted in replacement of west-side windows; the concrete walls prevented any further damage. The auditorium was altered in 1936 by the fire and consequent reconstruction of the stage and replacement of all of the seating; at this time the gym floor was replaced, because of water damage. C. 1948 the back portion of the auditorium was enclosed to form a band/music room. At an unknown date an elevator (presumably for handicapped access) was added in the hallway(s) at the northwest corner of the auditorium. Drop ceilings were added throughout the building at an unknown date. There are no other known interior alterations.

The El Reno High School building retains sufficient integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and location to enable it to transmit information about its role in El Reno's education history. The building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, as exemplary of an important pattern of El Reno's education history. It is also eligible under Criterion C as the only example of the work of Solomon Andrew Layton in El Reno and as a great example of his work in the Late Gothic Revival style.

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SUMMARY:

El Reno, Oklahoma, an agricultural service community for a broad surrounding region, emerged after the Land Run of 1889 and through a rapid growth of population quickly needed a system of public education. In 1891 city officials provided schools, and by the time of 1907 statehood the El Reno School District included five school buildings. Population growth and tax base increase prompted the construction of the El Reno High School Building in 1911. The design of the new facility represented an educational philosophy of preparing students for life after high school, in terms of preparing useful citizens for business and society. The emergence of a separate high school facility for El Reno students followed a national trend toward age-grade segregation and toward expansion of curriculum to enhance students' personal development. The new building, first occupied in January 1912, incorporated classrooms for training in the standard subjects as well as spaces for other courses. In 1925-26 the building was expanded to the east, doubling its size to include the city's junior high school enrollment. Until 1936 the building served as El Reno's only secondary school facility. In 1938, with the creation of El Reno Junior College, the building's function expanded to include the community's only institution of higher education. The El Reno High School building represents the pattern of educational administration and system organization from 1911 through 1949 and after. It also symbolizes the educational development and attainment of several generations of El Reno citizens. The El Reno High School building retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The El Reno High School was one of two buildings in El Reno designed by Oklahoma's premier architects, Layton and Smith. The other, the Canadian County Court House, was razed in 1964, leaving the high school as the single example of this firm's work in El Reno. The El Reno High School building is eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A because it exemplifies the historical pattern of events within the educational context of El Reno, Oklahoma, 1912-1949, and under Criteria C, as the city's only example of the work of Solomon A. Layton and S. Wemyss Smith.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The community of El Reno, Oklahoma, was created as a result of the Land Run of 1889, which opened the Unassigned Lands of central Oklahoma to settlement. El Reno's Grand Street was the west boundary line of the Unassigned Lands, and thus the town developed first on its "east side." In 1892, with the opening of the

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Cheyenne-Arapaho lands, which lay west of the Unassigned Lands, the west side of El Reno developed. The town was essentially laid out by the Oklahoma Homestead and Townsite Company.(1)

El Reno grew and prospered in its first years. Stores, newspapers, and other amenities developed as the population increased. On June 11, 1890, the town was incorporated, and by 1900 the population numbered 4,120. At statehood in 1907 the number had swelled to 5,370, and by the end of the decade the town was home to nearly 8,000 Oklahomans.(2) During 1907-1908, 13 new residential areas, with a combined total of 281 residences, were constructed and occupied.(3) By 1930 the town's population had risen to 9,384.(4)

The town was a service center for a surrounding region of agricultural enterprise. El Reno was a market place for selling crops--primarily cotton and wheat-- and for transporting those and other products out to a wider regional and national market and for transporting manufactured goods into the local market. The arrival of the Rock Island Railroad, shortly after the town's establishment, provided the important transportation link.(5) Commercial and industrial enterprises thrived. These included the standard agriculture-oriented retail businesses, such as seed stores and implement dealers, as well as "light industry" that included mills and grain elevators; a foundry and machine shop that manufactured stoves; an automobile factory that produced the "Auto Buggy"; and a china plant.(6) An expanding population and industrial development provided a tax base to meet the needs of a growing community. By 1908 the amount of taxable property was an estimated \$2.9 million.(7) Economic activities continued to expand through the 1920s.

During the community's first two decades many civic projects improved the quality of life for El Reno's citizens. El Reno local government created an infrastructure that incorporated a fire department, gas and electric light systems, paving, and a modern sewer system. A street railway provided local transportation. Parks and recreational facilities appeared. In 1907-1908 the citizens constructed a new courthouse for Canadian County and a new city hall for El Reno. Education also received attention with the establishment of a public library (with new building funded in 1904 by the Carnegie library program) and new buildings for the town's public school system.(8)

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EDUCATION CONTEXT:

Pioneer families knew that education was important for their children's future. In the early years settlers banded together to hold school in their own homes--dugouts and soddies on the prairie. Families raised the money to pay for a few books and perhaps one part-time teacher. Later, as the economy grew, these same families set up "subscription schools" and furnished materials to build school houses and pay full-time teachers.(9)

The El Reno school system grew out of that environment, and within a few years of the town's settlement several school houses had been constructed. The first public school opened in January of 1891 with two teachers. In 1892 the school board ordered the construction of three school buildings (one of which was for African American children). These were small wood-frame buildings dedicated to both primary and secondary education. The first brick school house was Irving School, constructed in 1895. More were built shortly after the turn of the century, including "Old" Lincoln School (1902), Central School (1905), and Webster (1908). In addition, a Catholic parochial school, Sacred Heart, was opened.(10) The total public school enrollment in 1908 neared 1,400.(11) Central School was attended by children in grades 1 through 8 of the south part of town, and all high school classes (numbering 160 students in 1910)also met there. By 1913 the town's schools included Lincoln (razed and rebuilt in 1938 by WPA), Irving (standing), Webster (razed and rebuilt in 1938 by WPA), and Booker T. Washington (addition built in 1938 by WPA) primary schools, Central School (grades 1-8; razed 1968) and the new El Reno High School, constructed in 1911 and opened in January 1912 in a residential area south of downtown.(12)

El Reno's population stabilized during the 1920s, and school building temporarily ceased. But the generation born during that decade began attending school in the 1930s. By 1940 the district's total enrollment had risen to 2,335 students at all six schools. El Reno High School numbered 760 high school students and 343 junior high students.(13) The El Reno School District added a second junior high building in 1936 and new elementary schools in 1939, 1950, 1952. Citizens and school board members resisted the 1960s and 1970s trend of constructing new high schools to serve outlying residential areas, and the original El Reno High School, located in the center of the city, remained the community's only high school facility.



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EDUCATION SIGNIFICANCE:

The emergence of a separate high school facility for El Reno students followed a national trend toward age-grade segregation and toward expansion of curriculum to enhance students' personal development. Around the turn of the century, a growing and prosperous American middle class embraced the concept of self-improvement through the efficient, business-like organization of curriculum and through exposure of students to social and cultural activities. The movement was strongly influenced by the philosophical pragmatism of John Dewey, who believed that schools should reflect society in general. Taking part in the resulting movement toward "progressive education," many educators were motivated to provide courses that would improve students' ability to succeed in business and in society. No longer was mastery of the three R's considered to be an adequate education. Students in the late nineteenth century and through the 1920s (and presently as well) could take business courses, drama, music, art, and "physical culture," with attendant extra-curricular activities including athletics, debate, student council, social clubs, and so forth. Accordingly, school administrators and architects began to plan and design high school buildings and facilities to accommodate those types of instruction. As the new century proceeded, new buildings would include gymnasiums, theaters, auditoriums, home economics rooms, science labs, swimming pools, and so forth. The El Reno High School building reflects these changes in educational theory and illustrates the new concept in the functionality of school buildings in the early twentieth century. As noted in a local newspaper in 1911, the new building would be "a monument to the progressive educational spirit of the school board and the citizens at large." The next three decades brought the city's high school into the full flush of progressive education, with new classes including home economics, commercial, vocational agriculture, industrial arts, and so forth, in addition to the traditional academic subjects.(14)

By 1910 the town of El Reno needed additional space for a growing student population. School officials were realizing the need to separate primary grades from secondary grades according to the new "progressive education" methodology of the time. A February 3, 1910, editorial in the *El Reno American* evaluated the situation: "El Reno needs more school buildings, larger ones. There is not a school room in the City of El Reno that is not filled to its full capacity, and there are but few of them that are not crowded far beyond their capacity. . . . There are, we are informed, 1,475 pupils enrolled. There are no less than forty

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children to each room and in some rooms sixty to sixty-three students . . . . The congested condition of the schools should be relieved." (15)

In June 1910 the El Reno School Board decided that a new high school building must be built. Considerable debate ensued over the location of the new school and, eventually, in January 1911 a site was chosen on S. Choctaw and purchased for \$7,850. The original site included lots 12-18, block 125, of the Original Town of El Reno. A bond election would fund the construction, which was estimated at \$75,000.(16) The school board selected Oklahoma City architect and former El Reno resident Solomon A.Layton to design the edifice. Layton, who designed some of Oklahoma's most important public buildings, including the state capitol building and 46 public schools in Oklahoma City, is acclaimed as one of the most prominent architects in the state's architectural history. He is particularly noted for the ornamentation that he placed on buildings. Layton's partner in designing El Reno's new high school was S. Wemyss Smith, a Fort Worth, Texas, architect who had recently come to Oklahoma to join Layton's firm.(17)

Excavation of the basement was contracted on March 23, 1911, and work began immediately. The school board opened building construction bids in April, and on April 20, 1911, the contract was awarded to L. T. Lee, of Oklahoma City, whose bid was \$50,600. Additional contracts went to the firm of Lewis and Kitchen, Kansas City, for \$9,626 for installing a fan-blast heating system and to J. G. Arrington, of El Reno, for plumbing installation in the amount of \$2,790. The contract called for completion of the building within seven months. An additional bond election in the amount of \$15,000 provided additional funds to make the stairways and hallways fireproof (with any unexpended amount going into the general school fund).(18) By May 1911 construction was well under way, and by August crews began on the second floor. Completed in late 1911, the building cost a total amount of \$89,951 for building and equipment.(19)

The first classes began in the building in January 1912 for the spring semester of study, and an open house, held on January 19, showed off the new edifice to an admiring public. A formal dedication was held that evening in the auditorium.(20)

On May 24, 1912, the first of many commencements took place in the auditorium. The class of 1912 passed across the stage to receive their diplomas and begin a legacy of personal attainment made possible by El Reno's new

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educational facility.(21) For the next 87 years this building served the educational needs of El Reno's high-school-age youth and is the town's only high school.

In the next decade changes came to the original El Reno High School building. The junior high grades--seventh and eighth--became part of the high school population, but this quickly overcrowded the building, which had been built for 500 students. Earlier, in 1921, a movement had begun to construct a junior high school building next to the high school. In May 1921 voters approved a \$214,000 bond for this purpose. Plans called for the new wing to be bigger than the original school, with classrooms on two floors and an expanded auditorium, a gymnasium, and a swimming pool. Lots 4-11 (adjacent to and east of the high school property, on Bickford) were purchased, bids were taken and construction contracts awarded, and excavation began for the basement. Unfortunately, after the school bonds were sold, the purchasing financial institution failed and the money was lost. The school board cancelled the expansion plans.(22)

By 1925 the high school population stood at nearly 1,000--twice the building's intended capacity. Concerned school board members and citizens determined to follow through with the much-needed high school expansion project. Citizens voted for another \$50,000 bond which, coupled with an additional \$50,000 from city funds, would finish the addition.(23) In December 1925 construction resumed on the junior high, with a revised and scaled-down floor plan. In March the high school grades (9-12) moved their classes to City Hall for the duration of the spring term, while construction workers removed the high school's east wall and part of the roof, in preparation for joining the old and new buildings. The addition effectively doubled the site of the facility. A major portion of the new section was an auditorium intended for both school and public use. On September 2, 1926, the new section was completed, and on the thirteenth the seventh and eighth grades entered the building for their first classes of the year.(24)

Two other important events occurred during the school's first three decades. In September 1928 a gas line exploded in the high school (west) section of the building, resulting in minor damage but no deaths and only no injuries.(25) The damages were repaired within a few days. In October 1936 faulty electrical wiring caused a fire to erupt in the auditorium (in the junior high/east section), completely destroying the stage, much of the seating, and the gymnasium floor in the basement. The extensive damage, caused primarily by water, totalled \$20,000 and necessitated the rebuilding of the roof structure, stage, auditorium seats

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and floor, and gymnasium floor (below the auditorium). By mid school year 1937-1938 the repairs were complete. (26) These calamities did not, however, disrupt the school's educational mission.

In the years immediately prior to World War II, increased emphasis was placed on the need for students to continue their formal education after attaining a high school diploma. The junior college movement came to El Reno. In 1938 a new educational program was to be housed in El Reno High School. The El Reno School Board voted to create a junior college curriculum by adding grades 13 and 14 to the high school. El Reno Junior College held classes in the high school building from the fall of 1938 through the 1960s. El Reno Junior College's stated mission was to prepare students to enter a four-year college. (27)

The El Reno High School building represents the pattern of educational administration and system organization from 1911 through 1949 and after. It also symbolizes the educational development and attainment of several generations of El Reno citizens. It was and is El Reno, Oklahoma's only high school.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The El Reno High School Building is architecturally significant within the built environment of El Reno, Oklahoma, because of its association with Oklahoma's premier architect, Solomon A. Layton. The building was designed by the important Oklahoma City architectural firm of Layton and Smith, who also designed the Oklahoma State Capitol Building in 1911-1913 (NR 76001572). Solomon A. Layton, who was an El Reno resident until he moved his practice to Oklahoma City in 1907, designed two public buildings in El Reno. The largest of these was the Canadian County Courthouse (c. 1905), which was razed in 1964. In 1911 Layton and Smith designed a magnificent Gothic high school building for El Reno, replete with decorative elements that may reflect Layton's involvement with the conceptualization. The elaboration is similar to that found in Oklahoma City's Central High School and in the Bizzell Memorial Library, University of Oklahoma. (28)

Educational buildings were something of a specialty with Layton and his various partners. They are noted for having designed a building for the first high school organized in Oklahoma Territory, that being Oklahoma High School. While this school operated from 1892, not until 1909 did it have a building. In that year Central High School (NR 76001570), Layton's design, was completed in Oklahoma

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City. The firm, later reconstituted as Layton, Smith, Forsyth, and Hicks, continued to design public school buildings into the 1940s, completing some 46 in Oklahoma City alone.(29) While the building has been altered, El Reno High School is the only El Reno school building credited to Layton and Smith and is the sole remaining Layton-designed building in El Reno. It is also the city's only example of the "Collegiate Gothic" interpretation of Late Gothic Revival Revival.

Architect-designed, constructed in 1911, the High School building served until 1936 as the only secondary-school facility in the town of El Reno. From 1938 through 1949 and onward until 1968 the building housed the community's higher education activities as well. The El Reno High School building retains its historic character, in terms of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It is eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A because it exemplifies an important pattern of historical events within the educational context of El Reno, Oklahoma, and under Criterion C, because it is El Reno's only example of the work of Solomon A. Layton and partners and is also the city's only "Collegiate Gothic" example.

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ENDNOTES

1. *History of Canadian County* (El Reno: Canadian County History Book Association, 1991), 25, 88-91; H. Merle Woods, *The El Reno That Was* (El Reno, Okla.: El Reno (Oklahoma) American, 1978), 1-20.
2. *History of Canadian County*, 94-95.
3. Walter G. McComas, "The Growing City of El Reno," *Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine* 7 (No. 1, Aug.-Sept. 1908): 78.
4. *History of Canadian County*, 95.
5. McComas, "El Reno," 76; Woods, *The El Reno That Was*, 24-25.
6. McComas, "El Reno," 78; *History of Canadian County*, 95.
7. McComas, "El Reno," 76.
8. *Ibid.*, 76-78; *History of Canadian County*, 92, 95.
9. *History of Canadian County*, 50, 92.
10. *Ibid.*, 225-228, 264; Etta D. Dale, "The First Quarter Century of the El Reno Schools" (M. A. thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1940), 14, 24, 39.
11. McComas, "El Reno," 78; Carolyn Barker, "The First 100 Years of the El Reno Public Schools" (1994; typescript, vertical file, El Reno Public Library), 22, 30.
12. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, El Reno, Oklahoma, 1908, 1913, 1928; Dale, "First Quarter Century," 100-110, 155; Barker, "First 100 Years," 22, 30.
13. Barker, "First 100 Years," 58.
14. Merle Curti, *The Growth of American Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 548-51, 565, 682; *El Reno (Oklahoma) Democrat*, 12 January 1911; *The Boomer*, 1922, 1926, 1927, 1938, 1939 (Yearbook of El Reno High School).

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15. *El Reno (Oklahoma) American*, 3 February 1910.

16. *Ibid.*, 6 January 1911.

17. Mary Jo Nelson, "Solomon Layton, Architect," *Of The Earth: Oklahoma Architectural History*, ed. Howard L. Meredith and Mary Ellen Meredith (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1980), 87-92.

18. *Reno (Oklahoma) Democrat*, 23 March 1911, 20 April 1911, 19 May 1911; Dale, "First Quarter Century," 158-163.

19. Barker, "First 100 Years," 31-32; Dale, "First Quarter Century," 166.

20. Barker, "First 100 Years," 31-32.

21. *Nonpareil*, 1912 (Yearbook of El Reno High School), n. p.; Dale, "First Quarter Century," 166.

22. *History of Canadian County*, 225; Barker, "First 100 Years," 41, 43.

23. *El Reno (Oklahoma) Democrat*, 24 September 1925; Barker, "First 100 Years," 44-49.

24. *El Reno (Oklahoma) Democrat*, 5 October 1925, 6 October 1925, 25 November 1925, 9 December 1925, 14 December 1925, 6 March 1926, 2 September 1926, 16 September 1926; *The Boomer* (Yearbook of El Reno High School), 1927; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, El Reno, Oklahoma, 1928; Barker, "First 100 Years," 44-49.

25. *El Reno (Oklahoma) American*, 13 September 1928.

26. *El Reno (Oklahoma) American*, 8 October 1936; *The Boomer*, 1938 (Yearbook of El Reno High School), n. p. *History of Canadian County*, 225-226; Barker, "First 100 Years," 59-60.

27. *El Reno (Oklahoma) American*, 26 May 1938, 9 June 1938; 25 August 1938, 8 September 1938; *The Boomer*, 1939 (Yearbook of El Reno High School), 8; Barker, "First 100 Years," 65.

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28. Nelson, "Solomon Layton: Architect," 59 (photo), 88-89, 91, 93.

29. Ibid.; *Great Buildings Ahead: A Guided Tour of Central Oklahoma's Architectural Landmarks*. Oklahoma City: American Institute of Architects, Central Oklahoma Chapter, 1989, 33.



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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The boundaries of the resource include all of Lots 5-18 of Block 125, Original Town of El Reno, Oklahoma.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

These are the legally recorded boundaries of the property on which the El Reno High School building is sited.