NPS Form 10-900 (Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service AUG 11 2011

NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

OMB No. 10024-0018

686

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property	
historic name Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium	
other names/site number Site #CL1022, Simmons High School Gymnasium	
Site West vas Shannon Tight Sonor Cymmusum	
2. Location	
street & number 767 Layne Street	not for publication
city or town Okolona	vicinity
state Arkansas code AR county Clark code 019	zip code
3. State/Federal Agency Certification	
request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Reg Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property 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/Title Arkansas Historic Preservation Program State or Federal agency and bureau In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See Continuation sheet for comments.)	M meets □
Signature of certifying official/Title Date	
State or Federal agency and bureau	
4. National Park Service Certification	,
I hereby certify that the 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.	Date of Action 9-23. U
other, (explain:)	

Name of Property	County and State
5. Classification	
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply) Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in count.)
	Contributing Noncontributing 1 buildings sites structures objects
	1 Total
Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A	Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
6. Function or Use	
Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions) RECREATION AND CULTURE/sports facility	Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions) VACANT/NOT IN USE
7. Description	
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions) OTHER/Plain-Traditional	Materials (Enter categories from instructions) foundation CONCRETE walls CONCRETE BLOCK, METAL
	roof METAL other

 $\begin{tabular}{ll} \textbf{Narrative Description} \\ \textbf{(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)} \end{tabular}$

Clark County, Arkansas

Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium

Okolona	Colored	High	School	Gymnasium
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Clark County, Arkansas

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SUMMARY

The Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium is a clay tile and metal building located at 767 Layne Street on the south side of Okolona, Clark County, Arkansas. The building was built in c.1950 and rests on a continuous cast-concrete foundation. Metal-framed awning windows fenestrate the building and a gabled metal roof caps the building.

ELABORATION

The Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium, which is the last remaining building from the African-American school campus, is located at 767 Layne Street in Okolona, Clark County, Arkansas. The building was built c.1950 on the southern edge of Okolona. The building is a utilitarian, plain-traditional building, without any form of stylistic ornamentation.

The Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium rests on a continuous cast-concrete foundation and has clay tile walls near the front of the building. The rest of the building's walls are corrugated metal. The gable roof is metal. The main entrance of the building is on the west side and is sheltered by a shed-roofed awning. Metal-framed awning windows fenestrate the building.

Front/West Façade

The front facade of the original building is oriented around the central entrance with double doors. The lower part of the façade, to the top of the entrance, is built out of clay tile blocks, while the rest of the façade is covered in corrugated metal. To the right and left of the central entrance were restroom entrances. In the 1970s, the central entrance was widened from a single door to double doors. Circa 2000, the doors to the right and left of the central entrance (the bathroom entrances) were bricked in. However, the shed-roofed awnings remain above these entrances. A louvered rectangular vent is also present in the gable peak.

Side/South Facade

The south side of building is mainly covered with the corrugated metal, except for the lower part of the façade near the east west end, which is comprised of the clay-tile blocks. The clay-tile block portion of the façade is fenestrated by two four-pane, metal-framed, awning windows. Just to the east of the clay-tile block section of the façade is a four-pane, metal-framed, awning window low in the façade. Another window of this type is present at the west end of the façade. In between these windows, four, nine-pane, metal-framed awning windows are present near the top of the façade.

Rear/East Façade

The rear facade of the building is sided with corrugated metal. The façade has a rectangular louvered vent in the gable peak and an original steel door near the north side of the façade.

Okolona	Colored	High	School	Gymnasium	
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Side/North Façade

The north side of the building, like the south façade, is mainly covered with the corrugated metal, except for the lower part of the façade near the east west end, which is comprised of the clay-tile blocks. The clay-tile block portion of the façade is fenestrated by three four-pane, metal-framed, awning windows. The metal-sided portion of the façade is fenestrated by four, nine-pane, metal-framed awning windows near the top of the façade.

Integrity

The Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium retains good integrity. The only change to the building since it was built is the modification of the front entrance. The Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium retains its original windows – although many of the panes are missing – siding, and roof material. The setting around the building has changed somewhat as buildings from the Okolona Colored High School campus have been demolished. However, Okolona has remained a small town, just as it was c.1950, so that the setting around the Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium still reflects the small-town setting of the 1950s.

Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium Name of Property	Clark County, Arkansas County and State
	County and State
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.)	Levels of Significance (local, state, national) Local
A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.	Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions) ETHNIC HERITAGE/Black
☐ 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	Period of Significance
individual distinction.	c.1950-1961
□ 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.)	Significant Dates c.1950
Property is:	
A owned by a religious institution or used for	
religious purposes. B. removed from its original location.	Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)
 C. birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance. D a cemetery. 	Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)
☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.	
☐ F a commemorative property	Architect/Builder
☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.	Arcintect/Bunder
Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)	
9. Major Bibliographical References	
Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one of	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	Primary location of additional data: State Historic Preservation Office Other State Agency Federal Agency Local Government University Other Name of repository:
Record #	

Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium	Okolona	Colored	High	School	Gymnasium
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SUMMARY

The Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A with local significance for its associations with African-American education in Okolona and Clark County. The Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium, which was built c.1950, is the last remaining building from the Okolona Colored School campus, which was Okolona's African-American school. As the site of sporting events and other community gatherings, the Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium has been an important community center and gathering place for Okolona's African-American community over the past fifty plus years.

ELABORATION

Settlement in the area that is now Clark County began in 1811 in the vicinity of Arkadelphia and Okolona. In addition, Jacob and Abram Wells settled in the Hollywood vicinity in 1811 or 1812 and William Stroud also settled in the area shortly afterwards. Settlement in the southern part of the county, however, did not occur until around the middle of the 1800s. By 1854, only one road reached into southern Clark County, and it connected Arkadelphia with Rome on the Ouachita River. Only one other settlement was present. The settlement of Beech Creek, which had a post office from 1852 until 1866, was isolated in the south-central part of the county.

Okolona came into existence prior to the 1850s, since its post office was established on June 8, 1858, with Ashley Sloan as the first postmaster. The town quickly grew with a general store run by W. J. Bell established in 1868. By the late 1880s, Okolona was described as follows:

Okolona is situated in the western part of the county on the Southwestern Arkansas & Indian Territory Railroad, fourteen miles in a direction a little north of west from Smithton, on the Iron Mountain Railroad. The population is about 500. It is surrounded with the best agricultural lands of the county, and has the trade of a large scope of country. It is a neat and pretty town, and its principal business is the cotton trade. Several thousand bales of cotton are annually shipped away. The place contains five general stores, two drug stores, a millinery store, a furniture and undertaking store, several steam cotton-gins and corn-mills, a livery stable, a number of mechanics' shops, three hotels, five physicians, a weekly newspaper, a post-office, three churches – Methodist Episcopal, South, Missionary Baptist and Christian – a public school, and a lodge each of Masons and Knights of Honor. The Okolona

² Colton's railroad & township map of Arkansas. Map. New York, D. F. Shall, 1854.

¹ Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890, p. 115.

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Messenger, a seven-column newspaper, is owned by Ross & Hays, and is edited and published weekly by S. P. Meador, editor and publisher. It is Democratic in politics.³

From its earliest days, education was an important part of life in Okolona. The town's first school was a log building that had been built specifically for school and as a place to hold public gatherings. However, by the 1850s, a new building was needed, and a two-story building was built in 1859 at the same location. Information on the building is conflicting, but it was either a log building covered with siding or a frame building. In any case, it was owned by the local Masonic lodge, which had been formed in 1857, and they used the upper floor as their lodge.⁴

One school that operated out of the two-story building was the Okolona Male and Female Institute, which, according to an advertisement in the *Southern Standard* had begun classes in January 1871 and was managed by J. C. Wright. Charles Cargile was president of the Institute's board of trustees. Tuition fees for the Institute "ranged from two dollars per month for First Class Spelling, Reading and Writing, to five dollars a month for Fourth Class Ancient Languages and Higher Mathematics." In addition to the Institute, W. B. Carpenter opened a Male and Female School in January 1873, and advertisements from the period indicate that Carpenter, who "came highly recommended as an accomplished gentleman and successful teacher," was assisted by "competent teachers."

Although the first Okolona High School was built in 1890, "The Academy," as the two-story building was referred to, remained until 1927 when it was demolished. After the building's demolition, the Masons deeded the site to the Okolona School District.⁶

Interestingly, it was not just the education of whites that was important to the people of Okolona in the late 1800s. African-American education was also important to the town's residents. The first school for black children consisted of a five-month term that was taught by Jim Townsend in the black Baptist church. When Townsend left, Ap Weir served as the next teacher. Both Townsend and Weir were white, and it was not until the early 1900s that a man named Tennison was hired as the first black teacher. Charles Cargile, the

³ Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890, p. 121.

⁴ Richter, Wendy, ed. Clark County, Arkansas: Past and Present. Arkadelphia, AR: Clark County Historical Association, 1992, p. 290.

p. 290.
⁵ Richter, Wendy, ed. *Clark County, Arkansas: Past and Present.* Arkadelphia, AR: Clark County Historical Association, 1992, p. 290.

⁶ Richter, Wendy, ed. *Clark County, Arkansas: Past and Present*. Arkadelphia, AR: Clark County Historical Association, 1992, p. 290.

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Dection name				

president of the Okolona Male and Female Institute's board of trustees, donated the land for the first black school, which was located where the Okolona School Gymnasium is today.

Although it is not known when the first school was built on the site, it is known that the Rosenwald Fund helped fund a building in 1928. The two-room building, which also had a small lunch room, was built for a total of \$3,000. Of that cost, \$500 came from the local black community, \$2,000 came from public funds, and \$500 came from the Rosenwald Fund. By 1940, the school had four teachers, including principal Robert L. Wiley.9

By the 1946-1947 school year, the school term lasted seven months and there were eight teachers at the school. In addition, the school became an accredited junior high school. The following school year, the school term increased to eight months, sometimes referred to as a split term because it consisted of a sixmonth regular term and a two-month summer term. During the late 1940s, there were three other school districts, namely, Pleasant Grove, Holly Grove and Burtsell, but they were soon consolidated into what became known as the Okolona Colored High School. During the 1948-49 school year, the school became an accredited four-year high school. Also, during the late 1940s, three busses were purchased and the number of faculty members had increased to fourteen.¹⁰

However, the changes that occurred to the school campus, were not just limited to the length of the term and the number of faculty. By the late 1940s, it became necessary to enlarge the school's physical plant, and a vocational agriculture building, a cafeteria and three more classrooms were built. During the 1949-1950 school year, a new home economics building was built, as was the gymnasium.¹¹

The gymnasium needed to be a functional building that could serve the school community, as well as the Okolona community at large. The building chosen was developed by Armco, and would have been an easy building to construct for the campus. Armoo entered into the building business in 1929 when the Dixie Culvert and Metal Company bought a majority interest in the Harry Brothers Company of New Orleans. Dixie got full ownership of the company in 1934 and it was renamed the Iron and Steel Products Company,

⁷ Richter, Wendy, ed. Clark County, Arkansas: Past and Present. Arkadelphia, AR: Clark County Historical Association, 1992, p. 290.

⁸ Porter, David, W. "A Brief History of the Julius Rosenwald Fund Building Program with Special Reference to Arkansas." Unpublished Master's thesis, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, 1951, Table IX.

⁹ Richter, Wendy, ed. Clark County, Arkansas: Past and Present. Arkadelphia, AR: Clark County Historical Association, 1992, p. 290. ¹⁰ Information on the Okolona School Gymnasium in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

¹¹ Information on the Okolona School Gymnasium in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

Okolona Colo	red High	School	Gymnasium	
Name of Property				

Clark County, Arkansas

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Inc. In December 1942, the company was dissolved when it became a part of Armco Drainage and Metal Products, Inc. The company remains in business today as AK Steel. 12

Shortly after the gymnasium was built, during the 1951-1952 school year, further changes came to the campus, most notably a change in the school's name. The people of the community felt that the school needed a name change. Elnora Gatlin made the motion and it was seconded by many to change the name in honor of a faithful and loyal teacher, Mrs. Alma Frazier Simmons. As a result, the school became known as Simmons High School. 13

By the late 1960s, further consolidation struck Clark County and in 1969 Simmons and Okolona high schools consolidated. During the late 1970s and early 1980s all of the buildings on the Simmons campus were demolished except the gym and agri. shop. The shop was torn down in the mid 1980s, leaving the gymnasium as the last remaining building on the Simmons campus.¹⁴

Today, the Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium is an important surviving building related to African-American education in Okolona and Clark County. As an integral part of the Okolona School campus since c.1950, the Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium was an important meeting place for students and members of Okolona's African-American community. Hopefully, through the efforts of the Simmons High School Alumni Association, the Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium will remain an important part of Okolona and an important resource for its residents.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A with local significance for its associations with African-American education in Okolona and Clark County. The Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium, which was built c.1950, is the last remaining building from the Okolona Colored School campus, which was Okolona's African-American school. As the site of sporting events and other community gatherings, the Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium has been an important community center and gathering place for Okolona's African-American community over the past fifty plus years.

¹² Information on Armco found at: http://www.steelox.com/pdf/history brochure.pdf.

¹³ Information on the Okolona School Gymnasium in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. ¹⁴ Information on the Okolona School Gymnasium in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium	Okolona	Colored	High	School	Gymnasiun
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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890.

Colton's railroad & township map of Arkansas. Map. New York, D. F. Shall, 1854.

The Clark County Historical Journal, Volume Number 2. Published by the Clark County Historical Association, Spring 1978.

Information on Armco found at: http://www.steelox.com/pdf/history brochure.pdf.

Information on the Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

Porter, David. W. "A Brief History of the Julius Rosenwald Fund Building Program with Special Reference to Arkansas." Unpublished Master's thesis, Fisk University, Nashville, TN, 1951.

Richter, Wendy, ed. Clark County, Arkansas: Past and Present. Arkadelphia, AR: Clark County Historical Association, 1992.

Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium		ounty, Arkansas	
Name of Property	County and State		
10. Geographical Data			
Acreage of Property Approximately 1.5 acres.			
UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)			
1 15 468576 3761560 Zone Easting Northing	3 Zone	Easting Northing	
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 James Lockett, edited by Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register	& Survey Coordin	ator	
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program	date	June 6, 2011	
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street	telephone	(501) 324-9787	
city or town Little Rock	state AR	zip code 72201	
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 le A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large act		resources.	
Photographs			
Representative black and white photographs of the property.			
Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)			
Property Owner			
(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)			
name Simmons High Alumni Association, c/o James Lockett			
street & number 12699 Highway 51 South		telephone	
city or town Okolona	state AR	zip code71962	

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

Okolona Colored High S	School Gymnasium
Name of Property	

Clark County, Arkansas

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at a point 90 feet North of the Southwest corner of the Northwest Quarter (NW ¼) of the Northeast Quarter (NE ¼) of Section 3, Township 9 South, Roange 22 West, and run thence North 210 feet, thence East 300 feet, thence South 210 feet, thence West 300 feet to the point of beginning, containing approximately one and one-half acres of land, more or less.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary contains all of the land historically associated with the Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED AC	CTION: NOMINA	TION			
PROPERTY ONAME:	okolona Colore	d High S	School Gym	nasium	
MULTIPLE NAME:					
STATE & COUN	TY: ARKANSAS	, Clark			
DATE RECEIVE DATE OF 16TH DATE OF WEEK	DAY: 9/23	/11 /11	DATE OF	PENDING LIST 45TH DAY:	9/08/11 9/26/11
REFERENCE NU	MBER: 110006	86			
REASONS FOR	REVIEW:				
OTHER: / N		N PERI	IOD: N	LESS THAN 50 PROGRAM UNAP NATIONAL:	
COMMENT WAIV			9	23- U DATE	
	RETURN	REJE	ECT (C	DATE	
ABSTRACT/SUM	MARY COMMENTS	:			
		Wrote	ered in		
		The Natio	nal Register		
			of ic Places		
DEGOM /CDIME	D.T.1				
RECOM./CRITE	KIA				
REVIEWER			DISCIPLIN	E	
TELEPHONE			DATE		
DOCUMENTATIO	N see attache	d commer	nts Y/N se	e attached SLI	R Y/N
	ion is return			ing authority	, the



OKOLONA COLORED HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM GLARK COUNTY AR RALPH S. WILCOX

DECEMBER 2010

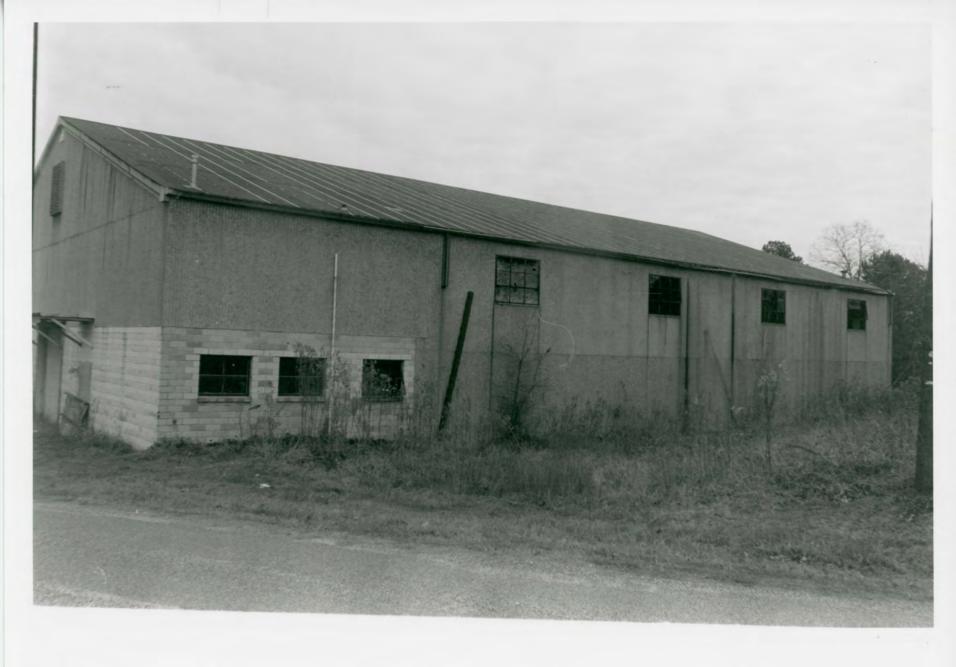
ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM, LITTLE ROCK, AR WEST FACADE, LOOKING EAST



OKOLONA COLORED HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM CLARK COUNTY, AR RALPH S, WILCOX

DELEMBER 2010

ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM, LITTLE ROCK, AR NORTH FACADE, LOOKING SOUTHEAST



OKOLONA COLORED HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM

CLARK COUNTY, AR

RALPH S, WILLOX

DECEMBER ZOIO

ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM, LITTLE ROCK, AR

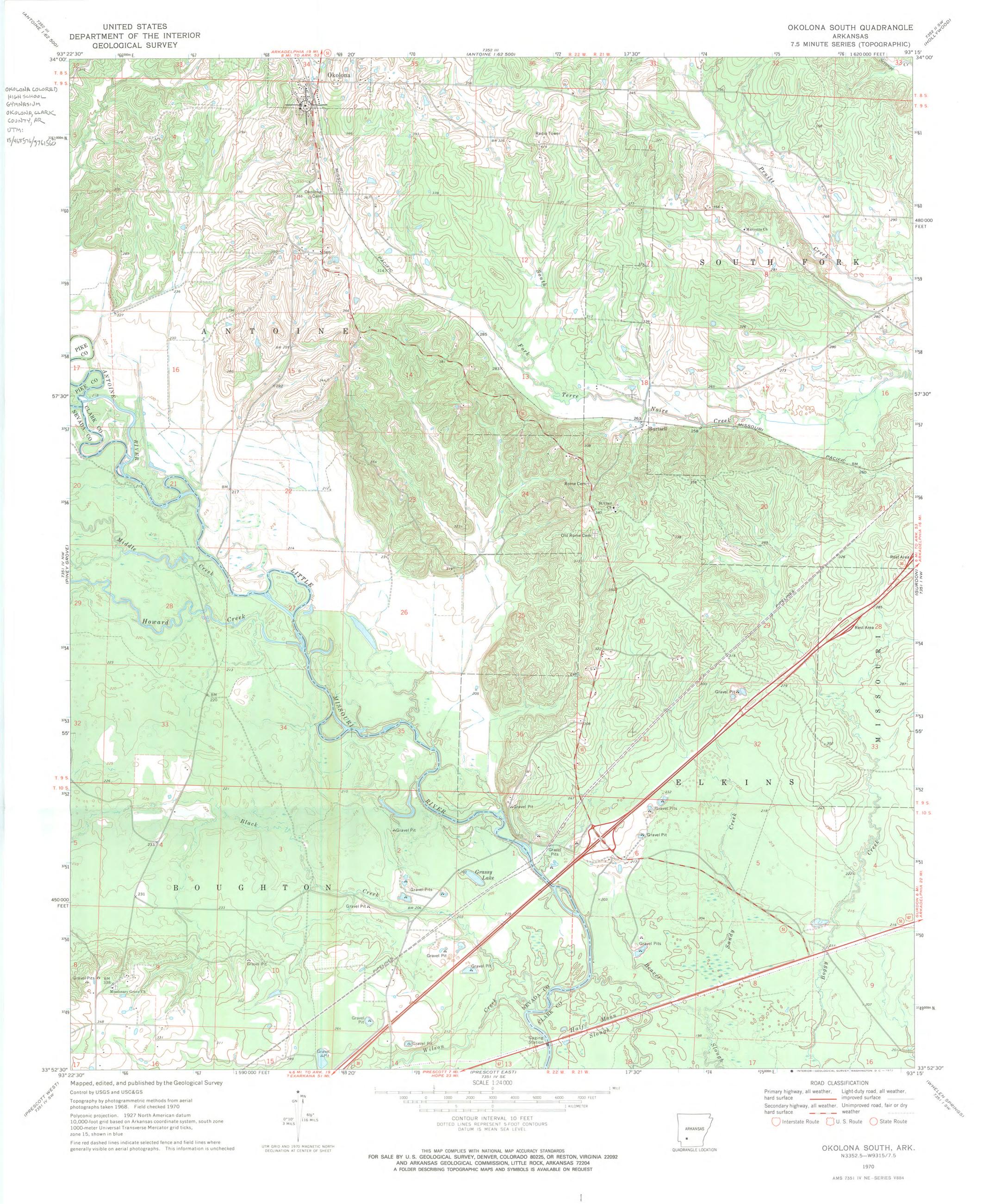
SOUTH FACADE, LOOKING NORTHEAST



OKOLONA COLORED HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM CLARK COUNTY, AR RALPH S. WILCOX

DECEMBER 2010

ARKANSAS HISTORIL PRESERVATION PROGRAM, LITTLE ROCK, AR EAST FACADE, LOOKING SOUTHWEST





The Department of Arkansas Heritage

Mike Beebe Governor

Cathie Matthews Director

Arkansas Arts Council

Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission

Delta Cultural Center

Historic Arkansas Museum

Mosaic Templars Cultural Center

Old State House Museum



Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

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info@arkansaspreservation.org

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August 3, 2011

Ms. Carol Shull
Chief of Registration
United States Department of the Interior
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
8th Floor
1201 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

RE: Okolona Colored High School Gymnasium – Okolona, Clark County, Arkansas

Dear Carol:

We are enclosing for your review the above-referenced nomination. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

If you need further information, please call Ralph S. Wilcox of my staff at (501) 324-9787. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Cathie Matthews

State Historic Preservation Officer

Ratthers

CM:rsw

Enclosure

