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The Carnegie Library in Cordell was established as a direct result of the efforts of the men's Commercial Club. Beginning in the early spring of 1910, the Club established a Library Committee, with I. M. Hull as chairman; these gentlemen were charged with the task of gathering books and securing a Carnegie grant.¹⁶ By the end of April more than 700 volumes had been donated and purchased, and in June the Commercial Club opened a reading room.¹⁷ In the autumn, the City Council voted to levy the requisite 2 mill tax for an operating fund, and the Commercial Club was then able to certify its program to the Carnegie Corporation, which required proof of public financial support. The Club applied for a grant of up to \$10,000, which was approved in January of 1911.¹⁸ Construction bids were solicited, and on June 8 a \$7,967 contract was awarded to D. C. Bass company, of Enid, Oklahoma. Architect A. A. Crowell was responsible for the building's design.¹⁹ The Carnegie grant paid this initial sum and later provided an additional amount of \$1,000 to complete the project, bringing Carnegie's contribution to \$8,967. The Library opened its doors to the public on January 18, 1912.²⁰

Over the next seventy years, the Cordell Public Library served the educational needs of the citizens of Cordell and Washita County. Until the construction of a small public library in Sentinel in the 1960s, the Cordell Library was the only such facility in the county. As noted in the Cordell Beacon of January 28, 1981, ". . . the Cordell Library is used extensively by school groups and individuals throughout the county."²¹ The building also served as a community center, as civic and private groups met there for lectures, and art shows were exhibited there over the years.²²

In 1980-1981 a movement led to the construction of a larger library facility, and on April 3, 1982, the building ceased to function as a library. On November 14, 1982, it was reopened as the Washita County Historical Museum, under a long-term lease between the city of Cordell and the Washita County Historical Society.²³ It has continued in operation as a museum through the present (1989).

Architectural Significance

The Cordell Carnegie Public Library is architecturally significant for three reasons. The first concerns the building's overall design. Designed and constructed in 1911, this building is the only example of Mission Revival style architecture extant in Cordell, Oklahoma. Mission Revival, which was born in California in the 1890s, spread eastward and influenced architectural design in other southwestern states after 1900. Its popularity lasted in the southwest until about 1920.²⁴ Mission Revival influences are reflected in the Cordell Library building's low roof with wide overhang and exposed rafters and in its curvilinear roof parapets (on east and west walls), which are similar in shape to that of parapets found in San Juan Capistrano Mission in California. The red tile roof, which is also indicative of Mission style, was removed in the 1950s.²⁵

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Elements which presage the Spanish Colonial Revival style (1915-1940) are also evident, particularly in the architect's choice of certain points of stylistic detailing: the sunbursts molded in brick on the pilasters at the main entry; the ornamental ironwork on the parapets; bracket-like concrete capitals atop the pilasters; and the compound segmental arches around windows and main entry.²⁶ No other buildings in Cordell reflect similar influences. Second, of the 25 Carnegie Libraries constructed in Oklahoma between 1901 and 1922, only Cordell's, Elk City's, and Miami's exhibited influences from the two Revival styles.²⁷ Miami's Carnegie Library has since been demolished. Third, at the time the Cordell Library was constructed (1911), the majority of buildings in Cordell were frame, with a dozen or so brick business buildings located along the square.²⁸ The library was built during a surge of public works activity during the 1900-1911 era, when city and county officials funded the construction of brick or stone structures, including a public school, in 1902; a city hall, in 1906; a jail, in 1908; two additional schools, in 1909; and the Washita County Court House, completed in 1911.²⁹ Of these buildings, only the Court House and Carnegie Library exist to reflect the associations of this important early period.

NOTES

¹Gerald Nash, The American West in the Twentieth Century: A Short History of an Urban Oasis (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), 3.

²Arrell M. Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries, 2nd ed. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 176, 184; Edward Everett Dale and Gene Aldrich, History of Oklahoma (Edmond, OK: Thompson Book Co., 1969), 260-261; "5,000 Awaited Go Signal," Clinton Daily News, Pioneer Achievement Edition, 13 April 1941, H-1.

³Michael M. Smith, "Resource Protection Planning Project: Patterns of White Settlement in Oklahoma, 1889-1907, Region 7," Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey, State Historic Preservation Office, 1986; "Organic Act," Oklahoma Red Book, 1912, comp. by Seth K. Cordon, 2 vols (Oklahoma City and Tulsa: Democrat Printing Co., 1912), 2: 526-544.

⁴Clinton Daily News, n. d., (1937), History of Custer and Washita Counties, 42.

⁵Ibid., 46; Edward Everett Dale, "The Cheyenne-Arapaho Country," Chronicles of Oklahoma 20 (December 1942): 368; Thomas A. Edwards, "Early Days in the C. and A.," Chronicles of Oklahoma 27 (Summer 1949): 159; Wagon Tracks: Washita County Heritage [N. P.: Washita County History

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Committee, (1976?)] , n. p.

⁶Cordell Beacon, 12 February 1920.

⁷Nash, American West, 47-49.

⁸Cordell Beacon, 19 April 1979; Cordell Weekly Beacon, 23 April 1903; Cordell Beacon, 17 March 1910; History of Custer and Washita Counties (1937), 50. Various issues of the Beacon, 1900-1911, refer to improvements.

⁹Dale and Aldrich, History of Oklahoma, 496.

¹⁰Cordell Beacon, 19 April 1979.

¹¹U. S., Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1910 (Washington, D. C.: G. P. O., 1911), 613.

¹²Oklahoma Libraries Commission, Oklahoma Libraries, 1900-1937 (Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Libraries Commission, 1937), 107.

¹³Robert M. Lester, Forty Years of Carnegie Giving (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), 6, 92-93.

¹⁴Oklahoma Libraries, 240; George S. Bobinski, Carnegie Libraries (Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 1969), 135.

¹⁵National Register Files, State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, OK.

¹⁶Cordell Beacon, 10 March 1910; *ibid.*, 31 March 1910.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 23 June 1910; *ibid.*, 6 October 1910.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 26 January 1911; Bobinski, Libraries, 214.

¹⁹Cordell Beacon, 8 June 1911; *ibid.*, 3 August 1911.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 25 January 1912.

²¹*Ibid.*, 28 January 1981.

²²*Ibid.*, *passim*, 1912-1982; scattered references illustrate the various community uses of the library over a seventy-year period.

²³*Ibid.*, 17 November 1982.

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²⁴ Marcus Whiffen, American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), 213-216; Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1984), 409-415.

²⁵ Whiffen, American Architecture, 213-216; McAlester and McAlester, Field Guide, 409-415.

²⁶ Whiffen, American Architecture, 225-229; McAlester and McAlester, Field Guide, 417-418.

²⁷ Oklahoma Libraries, passim (refer to photos and descriptions for Carnegie Libraries in Oklahoma).

²⁸ "The Story of Cordell in 1910--Told in Pictures," Cordell Beacon, 19 April 1979.

²⁹ Pioneer Achievement Edition, B-2; History of Custer and Washita Counties, 50.

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predominantly rural in orientation, with Cordell continuing to serve as a cultural center during the twentieth century.⁶

Concomitant with the context of frontier town-building was an impetus by local citizens toward public improvements.⁷ The Oklahoma Territorial Legislature provided mechanisms for taxing authority through which city and county governments could provide water systems, power plants and transmission systems, roads, sewer systems, schools, and libraries. The city of Cordell supported this movement and implemented all of these civic projects in the 1900-1911 period.⁸ In 1903 a legislative act authorized cities of 5,000 or more population to maintain public libraries and levy a tax of 2 mills per \$1 of assessed valuation to maintain a library operating fund.⁹

Educational Significance

The Cordell Carnegie Public Library possesses educational significance because of the role it played as an adjunct to the community's public and private schools. It served as Washita County's only public library from 1912 through the mid-1960s.

Schools and libraries were an important concern in Cordell in the 1900-1911 period. By Territorial law, all children aged 6 to 14 were required to attend school. The town of Cordell established public schools as early as 1902, and by 1910 the county boasted several public schools as well as two private college-prep high schools.¹⁰ Educational successes were revealed in the 1910 U. S. Census, in which Washita County ranked as the fourth highest county in the percentage of persons 6-14 years of age who were enrolled in Territorial schools; the county also had a high literacy rate among adults.¹¹ Cordell's city fathers intended to encourage and maintain the quality of education by establishing a free public library to serve the entire county.

This urge to provide a library coincided with the public library movement in Oklahoma in general, which had begun with the first settlement of the Territory in the 1890s. Credit for establishing the Territory's first such institutions goes to the Women's Clubs. The first public library in Oklahoma was constructed with a Carnegie grant, which enabled the city of Guthrie, in 1901 the Territorial capital, to have a library.¹² Having made his fortune in the steel industry, Andrew Carnegie retired at age 65 in 1900 and devoted his declining years to philanthropy. In total, his Carnegie Corporation (trust) provided more than \$43 million for free public library buildings in the United States and Great Britain.¹³ In the U. S., 1,681 were constructed; of these 25 were built in Oklahoma between 1901 and 1922.¹⁴ Of these 25, 17 are still standing in 1989.¹⁵

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The front, or south, elevation consists of three bays, with the entry in the center, recessed between broad pilasters and under a compound segmental arch. Each bay flanking the entry consists of a compound segmental arch containing a set of triple, single-light windows. The center window of each set has been raised, but not altered, for insertion of a window-type cooling unit. Each window is topped with an arched transom, set with a stained-glass light. In addition to the two window bays in the front facade, there are paired basement windows set in concrete window wells. These windows are double-hung, and the top sash is above ground level. On the first floor, west side, there is one single-light window on each side of the chimney; each is topped by a stained-glass transom; and each is set under a segmental arch. Basement windows also flank the chimney. On the east side, there is a window identical to those on the west side. There is a smaller single-light window above a ground floor entrance to the basement. The basement windows have rowlock brick lintels and wood sills. The north facade is pierced by three arched, stained-glass transoms identical to those in the front facade. Sashes and frames of all windows are original.

The building has three entrances. The front entry is now an aluminum frame door with plate glass. Above it is an arched transom set with stained glass. The original door was a wooden fifteen-light panel door. Balcony steps go to ground level, and below the balcony is a basement entrance having the original nine-light panel door with clear glass transom. On the east side, near the northeast corner, is a ground-level entrance having a solid-core wood door, which replaced an older door in 1984.

Cast concrete molding and ornamental brickwork enhance the building's appearance. A cast concrete band molding forms the sill of each set of windows and continues around the east and west corners of the building to function as a sill for the side windows. Below this, there is a belt of seven courses of brick. In the center of the front facade, on each side of the entry, the band molding and belt course continue perpendicularly to the wall, forming a wing wall or enclosure for the balcony. Below the belt course is a second case concrete band molding, or water table, at balcony window head level. This band continues around each side of the building but terminates at the north corners. In the center of the front facade the water table also delineates the platform level of the balcony. Balcony steps go to ground level, with an outwardly curving wing wall on each side. The north facade is decorated with corbeled brick courses which form continuous arches over and between three sets of arched transom windows. Three contiguous courses of brick project 1" from the wall and continue the line of the water table along the north facade, over basement windows. Decorative brickwork on the front facade includes brick "sunbursts" of projecting bricks on the pilasters flanking the entrance. Quoin-like projecting bricks decorate the corners. The chimney is ornamented with corbeled brickwork on the face and at the cap. Electrical fixtures visible at each side of the entry are original but not presently functioning.

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The building's interior also remains essentially unaltered. Library shelves, arched window and door moldings, fireplaces and wood chimneypieces, basement stairs, wood ballusters, and posts, are all original. The wood flooring is now carpeted, and a drop ceiling with fluorescent fixtures hides the original plaster ceiling. The floor plan on the first floor still consists in one large reading room. The basement plan consists in one large room with an original wooden platform at the east end. This formerly functioned as a stage. A small storage room and a furnace room are on the far east. All of the interior woodwork and trim are original. Both first and second floors are presently used as museum exhibition areas.

The only alterations to the interior are the carpet and drop ceiling. Both were added in the 1980s. The only alterations to the building's exterior were the removal of the red tile roof in the 1950s and the installation of a safety handrail to the front steps in 1985. The City of Cordell regularly paints the cement and wood trim. The changes to the exterior do not significantly alter the appearance of the building or impair its ability to convey its identity and the feeling of its past environment. The building retains its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship.

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Cordell Carnegie Public Library

other names/site number Washita County Historical Museum

2. Location

street & number 105 East First St. N/A not for publication

city, town Cordell N/A vicinity

state Oklahoma code OK county Washita code 149 zip code 73632

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- 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>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official *Paul Holley*

Date October 2, 1989

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. 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:) _____

Alanna Byers

11/13/89

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Education-library

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture-museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls brick

roof synthetic-fiberglass

other concrete-balcony-steps

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Summary

The Cordell Carnegie Public Library is a red brick, one-story building detailed with decorative brickwork, cast concrete ornamentation, and stained-glass arched windows. Constructed in 1911, it is still in its original location, at 105 East First Street, one block north of the town square. It sits between the First Baptist Church, built in 1940, and the U. S. Post Office, built in the 1950s. The building is essentially unaltered: its red tile roof was replaced with composition shingles in the 1950s, and a metal pipe handrail was added to the front steps in 1985. The overall appearance and feeling of the structure suggest the Mission Revival style (1890-1920), which was popular at the time of the building's design by architect A. A. Crowell. This is reflected in the use of the curvilinear gable or parapet. The low roof, wide overhang, and exposed rafters are also after the Mission example. Decorative elements suggest that Spanish Colonial Revival influences (1915-1940) were already being felt and considered useful by this architect. These elements are: symmetrical facade; entrance accented by pilasters; compound arches around windows and doors; ornamental ironwork; decorative concrete molding for coping on parapets and bands; bracket-like capitals; and decorative, corbeled brickwork. The building functioned as a library during its entire period of significance. It still reflects significant associations and is the only extant example of Mission Revival/Spanish Colonial Revival architecture in Cordell, Oklahoma.

Description

The building is rectangular in form, measuring 19' (north to south) and 42½' (east to west), and it is a self-contained and horizontal volume. The first floor is raised one-half story over a full basement. The roof is hipped, with mission-style parapets rising from the east and west walls, extending almost to the height of the ridge line, and supporting external-wall chimneys. Steel rods which stabilize the brick parapets are terminated at each end with scrolled iron pieces. Exposed rafters in the north and south overhangs are structural. The eaves on the east and west are interrupted by the parapets, and the rafter tails exposed here are structural also. The building is roofed with composition shingles, the original red mission tile roof having been removed in the 1950s and replaced with shingles.

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Education
Architecture

Period of Significance

1911-1939

Significant Dates

January 12, 1912

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Crowell, A. A.-Architect

Bass, D. C.-builder

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Summary

The Cordell Carnegie Public Library is significant historically within the local context of Cordell, Oklahoma. The building conveys the feeling and associations of patterns of activity in Cordell's educational and architectural history during the 1911-1939 period. Constructed in 1911 and opened in January of 1912, the building housed a major educational resource. The Cordell library was the only public library in Washita County from the time of its opening in 1912 until the mid-1960s. As a work of architecture, the Library building represents the only extant example of Mission Revival/Spanish Colonial Revival-style architecture in Cordell. It is also one of the only extant buildings representing municipal public works construction projects implemented in the 1900-1911 era.

Historical Context

Urban development was one of the prime characteristics of western frontier settlement;¹ this is doubly true of Oklahoma, where "land runs" in 1889, 1892, and 1893 resulted in the erection of "instant" towns which provided centers of government, culture, and market services, often before² homesteaders had even filed claims for or improved their rural properties. In 1890 the future site of Cordell, Oklahoma Territory, lay within a huge expanse of land recently ceded to the United States by the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes. Oklahoma Territory was created by Congress in 1890,³ and on April 19, 1892, settlers were admitted into the "C and A" region. The ensuing "run" resulted in the immediate establishment of several towns, including Old Cordell and also Cloud Chief, which was designated as the governmental seat of a 1,008-square-mile county later named Washita.⁴ As the site of Old Cordell ultimately proved unfit for permanent habitation, in 1898 the town relocated to the center of the county. It was known for some years as New Cordell. In 1900, Cordell became the county seat.⁵ Other early communities of Washita County were Bessie, Corn, Foss, Dill, Rocky, and Sentinel. The county remained

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bobinski, George S. Carnegie Libraries. Chicago, IL: American Library Association, 1969.
Burchfiel, Ed. Interview by Dianna Everett, 25 April 1989. Notes, State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City.
Cordell Beacon, 31 March 1910, 28 April 1910, 26 January 1911, 13 April 1911, 8 June 1911, 3 August 1911, 28 December 1911, 25 January 1912, 19 January 1978, 28 January 1981, 17 November 1982.
Oklahoma Libraries Commission. Oklahoma Libraries, 1900-1937. Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Libraries Commission, 1937.

N/A See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one (1) acre

UTM References

A 14 500970 3905290
 Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
 Zone Easting Northing

D _____

N/A See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 16, 17, & 18, less north 52 feet of Lots 16 & 17, and less north 52 feet of west 15 feet of Lot 18, in Block 39, Original Town of New Cordell, Oklahoma.

N/A See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The verbal description follows the property's legally recorded boundary lines, County Clerk's office, Washita County Court House, Cordell, Oklahoma.

N/A See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dianna Everett, Researcher
 organization S. H. P. O.-Okla. Historical Society date May 2, 1989
 street & number 2100 N. Lincoln telephone (405) 521-2491
 city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73105