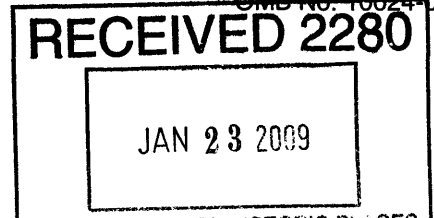


United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

074



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction 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 Northside Elementary School

other names/site number Northside Early Learning Center/Blackwell Head Start

2. Location

street & number 720 West Doolin Avenue [N/A] not for publication

city or town Blackwell [N/A] vicinity

state Oklahoma code OK county Kay code 071 zip code 74631

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Bob Beckler
Signature of certifying official/Title

State Historic Preservation Officer

1-20-09
Date

State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma Historical Society
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 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
 - See continuation sheet.
- other, explain
 - See continuation sheet.

X Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

[Signature] 2/23/2009

Northside Elementary School
Name of Property

Kay County, Oklahoma
County/State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	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.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION:school

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION:school

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK
roof ASPHALT
other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Northside Elementary School
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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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

EDUCATION

Periods of Significance

1956-1957

Significant Dates

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates
architects

J.J. Reardon Construction Company, builder

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Oklahoma Historical Society

Northside Elementary School
Name of Property

Kay County, Oklahoma
County/State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 5 Acres MOL

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

- | | | | | |
|----|------|---------|----------|------------------------------|
| 1. | 14 | 652330 | 4075190 | (NAD27) |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | |
| 2. | | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | |
| 3. | | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | |
| 4. | | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | [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 Cynthia Savage, Architectural Historian, for Preservation Oklahoma, Inc.
organization Architectural Resources & Community Heritage Consulting date September 2008
street & number 346 County Road 1230 telephone _____
city or town Pocasset state OK zip code 73079

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name Blackwell Public Schools, Mrs. Lesa Ward, Superintendent
street & number 201 East Blackwell telephone 580-363-2570
city or town Blackwell state OK zip code 74631

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 listings. 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 range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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Northside Elementary School
Name of Property

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DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY:

The Northside Elementary School was the last of four elementary schools designed in Blackwell, Kay County, Oklahoma, by the firm of Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates during the late 1940s and mid-1950s. Construction began on the school in March 1956 and was finished in February 1957. The Northside School was designed in the Modern style, utilizing a finger plan which remained popular at the time. A finger plan basically consisted of wings, usually set parallel to each other, and connected by a corridor system. The plan, developed in the late 1930s, was in vogue for various reasons, including the ease of which additions could be seamlessly added to the school plant.

The one-story, brick Northside School has only one educational wing with an all-purpose section located to the direct east of this. On the south side of the all-purpose room, is the principal's office and another classroom. Despite expectations in the 1950s, the school was never expanded. The building has a low-pitched, side-gabled, asphalt-covered roof over the educational wing and a flat roof on the all-purpose room. Evenly located along the roof are large, bubble-type skylights. The skylights are not visible atop the all-purpose room but the original plans specified them and early photographs show them. The foundation of the building is concrete. The historic doors are wood, slab with majority being single. Some wood doors have been replaced by metal doors but all remain slab. The windows are a combination of four-pane, three-pane, two-pane and single pane metal windows. The majority of windows feature operable, awning-type, rectangular panes on the bottom and/or top. The larger middle pane is fixed. Rather than brick, the area below the windows is clad with metal panels. The building is minimally ornamented with brown painted trim, including a wide metal coping, and ribbon windows.

The two main elements of the building, consisting of the long rectangular educational wing and the square all-purpose room, are connected by an open-air corridor. The connecting corridor has a dropped, flat roof supported by round, metal supports. Both the roofs of the educational wing and all-purpose room have a wide overhang which creates an open-air corridor on the front and adjoining sides. The overhanging roofs are supported by round metal supports.

At the time the building was constructed, the Northside site was the largest of all the school sites in Blackwell. It remains a large site with a sizeable, open, grass covered area to the backside of the building. Because of several factors, including the location of the building on a four-lane thoroughfare and the size of the site and comparative size of the relatively small school, the Northside School enjoys a broad setback from the street. This, in turn, necessitated a large landscape area on the front side of the building. The area is crossed by several sidewalks, including a prominent double walk that aligns with the corridor dividing the educational wing from the all-purpose room. About a quarter of the way up the

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walk, there is a brick retaining wall with a sign which reads "Blackwell Public Schools/Northside Early Learning Center." There are similar short brick walls dividing the space and providing a circulation pattern in the uncovered play area between the educational wing and the all-purpose room.

Within the front landscape area, a playground area featuring modern playground equipment has been created. For safety reasons, the west side of the front landscape area that contains the playground has been fenced with a chain link fence. A second, also chain linked, playground is located behind (north) of the all-purpose room. The playground areas are not counted separately because of their ubiquitous nature. The school from its earliest days would have had playground areas. Although now containing nonhistoric equipment and fenced for safety reasons, the playground areas do not interfere with the ability of the school to convey its significance; however, the areas also do not contribute to the historic significance of the school. As such, the playground areas are not included in the resource count.

The setting of the building has changed somewhat over the last five decades. To the south, west and north, the area remains largely residential. The historic, brick, 1930s, National Register-listed National Guard Armory also remains in place to the southeast of the school. To the direct east of the school, this area has been modernized with various commercial enterprises, including an older gasoline station and a modern Pizza Hut. Despite all of these changes, the Northside Schools ably conveys its historic and architectural significance.

The Northside Elementary School has been in use as an elementary school since its completion in 1957. Most recently, the school has served as the district's early learning center. However, the Blackwell Public Schools has begun construction on a new consolidated elementary school which will cause the mid-century schools, including Northside, to be put into a new use or vacated by the school district. Similar to the previous generation of Blackwell schools, the mid-century schools are considered outdated, particularly in terms of securing the students in a manner now required to avoid possible hazards and intruders. Because the fate of the buildings is uncertain, the Blackwell mid-century schools are considered threatened historic resources. The buildings were included on Preservation Oklahoma Incorporated's 2007 Most Endangered Properties list.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The Northside Elementary School is a one-story, brick, Modern style building with a concrete foundation. The roof is a combination of low-pitched, asphalt-clad, side-gabled and flat. The roof has a wide, metal-clad coping. The rectangular building consists of two main components, an educational wing and all-purpose room connected via an open-air corridor. Typical of mid-twentieth-century architecture, the building is minimally ornamented and its form is clearly related to its function.

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The relatively plain building was designed to not only provide ample amounts of natural light but to also take advantage of the prevailing winds to adequately ventilate the building. As such, the school features rows of windows on both the north and south sides. The south side windows largely consist of a combination of two-part, three-part and four-part. The metal windows have rectangular, awning panes either at the top or bottom and larger, fixed, middle sections. The four-part windows have two rectangular, awning panes on the top. The north side windows are single pane, metal, awning and all are located high on the wall. The doors throughout the building are wood slab painted dark brown to match the window frames and other trim.

The building has two components attached by an open-air corridor. The educational wing is on the west and the all-purpose section is on the east. The open-air corridor extends east-west along the front of the educational wing, as well as wraps around the east side of the wing. Another section of the open-air corridor is located along the front of the all-purpose section, as well as along the west side. A dropped section of the corridor runs between the education wing and all-purpose room. All of the open-air corridor sections are supported by systematically spaced, round, metal poles. The underside of the corridor is clad with wood panels. The corridor floor is concrete. The corridor floor is divided from the adjoining concrete sidewalks by low brick retaining walls.

The all-purpose section of the building includes the principal's office and a classroom on the south side of the building. The south elevation is nearly all windows. There are short brick sections on both the outside edges of the wall. From the east side, there are six large windows, all with a bottom metal panel. The four inner windows are all three-pane with the bottom and upper pane being operable. The outside windows are equal-height two-pane windows. Adjacent to the sixth window is a single, wood, slab entry, topped by a large transom. Next to this, are four windows. The outside windows are two-pane windows with only the lower rectangular pane being operable. The middle two windows are three-pane windows with both the upper and lower panes opening.

The east side of the all-purpose section contains only an off-center to the south, inset, partial porch. The porch is sheltered by a large, flat, metal awning that matches the corridor roof in other portions of the building. The porch roof is supported by round, metal supports. The doors in the porch include a single, slab, wood door on the south side and a double set of wood, slab doors on the north. All of the doors are painted blue and topped by large transoms. The area between the sets of doors and for short sections on both side walls is clad with narrow, vertical, wood siding. The brick north wall of the all-purpose section has no openings at all.

The west wall of the all-purpose section has, beginning on the north side, a short section of brick wall that contains only a metal air conditioning/heating unit set directly into the wall. The wider, middle section of the west wall is inset. On both the north and south section of side walls, there are single, slab,

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wood doors flanked on opposite sides by a single, three-quarter sidelight. There is a wood panel below each sidelight. The doors are topped by large transoms which extend above the sidelights as well. Beginning on the north side of the inset portion of the west wall of the all-purpose room, there are five windows. The northernmost window is a three-pane window, then there are two two-pane windows and then two three-pane windows. Next to this is a single, metal, slab door topped by a tall transom. To the south of the door, there are four windows. The first window from the south is the three-pane type, the next two windows are two-pane type and the fourth window is the three-pane type. Adjacent to the small section of windows are double, metal, slab doors. Another set of matching double doors are located in the south corner of the west-facing wall. The doors are separated by a full-height section of narrow, wood boards.

The south elevation of the educational wing is largely obscured by the widely overhanging roof and the inset, covered play areas. The wall is separated by narrow brick walls into four bays. Atop each of the narrow brick walls dividing the bays are small square windows. Beginning on the east edge of the south wall, a classroom is deeply inset in the first bay. The classroom is inset to allow the connecting open-air corridor to extend to the north, as well as along the front of the building. The room has a single slab door on the east side and then a row of windows. The door is topped by a large square transom that matches the upper window panes of the adjacent windows. The row of windows consist of a single two-pane window, then a narrow full-height sidelight, then two four-pane windows. In the far west window, the top pane has been filled with a window air conditioning unit. A brick wall separates this portion from the larger second bay. Attached to this wall are two, low, concrete benches for students to sit on. Along the upper part of the wall are seven, fixed, single pane windows of various sizes. The windows increase in size going north as the slope of the roof increases.

The second bay of the south elevation of the education wing is set back only by the width of the corridor that extends the length of the wall. The second bay has a row of eight windows, including sidelights, with a single door on the far west corner. The easternmost window is a two-pane window, then there is a single three-pane window. Next to this, there is narrow, full-height, three-pane sidelight. To the west of the sidelight, there are four three-pane windows. A narrow, full-height, three-pane sidelight flanks the west side of the four-row of windows as well. Then, between the west sidelight and the single, slab door, is a single, two-pane window. The door is topped by a narrow transom, equal in size to the upper rectangular pane of the windows to the immediate east. A short, narrow brick wall separates the second bay from the even larger third bay.

The third bay of the south elevation of the education wing is also deeply recessed. The front, covered portion of the wall creates a sizable play area for students. To provide light and air to the play area, there are two large skylights in the roof. The skylights have a wood grid on the bottom and a large plastic bubble on top. Both the east and west walls of the third bay feature two, attached, concrete benches.

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Along the top of the east and west walls are narrow bands of seven windows. The fixed, single pane windows increase in size as the slope of the side-gabled roof rises towards the center. The center window on both sides has been infilled with wood and a window air conditioning unit. The inset north wall includes two classroom entries and, in the center, separate boys and girls bathrooms. The matching classroom entries feature a single slab door to the inside and a row of four windows to the outside. The doors to both classrooms are single slab with a large square transom. Adjacent to the doors is a large, two-pane window, then a narrow full-height three-pane sidelight, then two four-pane windows. On both classroom entries, the second pane from the top of one of the four-pane windows has been filled with a window air conditioning unit. The flanking classroom entries are separated from the center bathroom section by narrow, brick, projecting walls. The center bathroom section of the third bay features two single slab doors in the center. Both doors have tall square transoms that match the height of the adjacent windows. Located high on the wall on either side of the two doors are rows of four windows. The window closest to either door is a large single pane window. Next to this is a narrow, single pane sidelight. On the outside, there are two two-pane windows with the bottom rectangular pane being awning.

The fourth bay of the south elevation of the educational wing is situated forward like the second bay. This bay features nine windows, including sidelights, and a single slab door. The door with its narrow rectangular transom is situated on the east side. Next to the door is a large single pane window and then a narrow, full-height, three-pane sidelight. To the west of the sidelight are four three-pane windows with another narrow, full-height, three-pane sidelight on the west side of the four windows. Adjacent to the west sidelight is a single three-pane window with a large single pane window at the west end of the bay.

The fifth bay of the south elevation of the educational wing is inset like the first, easternmost, bay. Along the long brick wall dividing the fifth bay from the fourth bay are two long, low, concrete benches. The top of the brick wall is broken by the row of seven, fixed, single pane windows which increase in size as the roof slopes upwards toward the center. The classroom entry features a row of four windows, including sidelights, and, on the far west side, a single slab door. The door is topped by a large square transom. Beginning on the east side, the windows consist of two four-pane windows, then a narrow full-height three-pane sidelight and then, adjacent to the door, a single two-pane window.

The east and west elevations of the educational wing are identical. Both walls begin just to the south of the roof's center line. On both sides, the brick end walls creating the east and west elevations project slightly to shelter the inset classroom entries on the south elevation. On top of both walls, where the south wall junctions are two, tall, narrow windows. Both east and west walls are plain except for the row of seven fixed windows at the top. The single pane windows decrease in size as they go north, reflecting the downward slope of the roof. On the west elevation, the middle window has been infilled with wood and a window air conditioning unit.

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The back (north) elevation of the educational wing is divided into three bays that are again set under a broad open-air corridor. As with the south elevation, the bays are defined by narrow, brick, projecting walls. The two, larger, outer bays are identical. Each bay has two single slab doors on the outside and, in the center, a three-part panel with windows. Between each of the single doors and the center panels are long, low, concrete benches. The panel on both sides consists of two full-height, single pane windows flanking a wider section clad with narrow, wood siding. Completely across the top of the wall, including the transoms above the doors and center panel section, is a row of single pane windows. As on the front of the building, the window pattern is repetitive. The window pattern in the outside bays consists of a rectangular transom, then another equal-size rectangular window, then a small square window, then four equal-size rectangular windows, then a small square window, then a rectangular window, then a narrow full-height sidelight, then two small square windows above the paneled section, then a narrow full-height sidelight, then a rectangular window, then a small square window, then four rectangular windows, then a small square window, then a rectangular window and, finally, a rectangular transom. Some of the rectangular windows have metal screens.

The smaller center bay of the north elevation of the education wing features two entries on the outside edges. Each entry consists of a double set of slab doors flanked by three-quarter, two-pane sidelights. The doors are topped by rectangular transoms. Between the doors, high on the wall is a row of eight windows. Adjacent to each doorway is a rectangular window, then next to this are small square windows. Between the two square windows is a row of rectangular windows. Below the windows, low on the brick wall, is a suspended, concrete bench.

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS

The building retains a good degree of integrity. The only alterations to the buildings include the infill of several windows with window air conditioning units and the replacement of some wood slab doors with metal slab doors. The site of the school has also been changed by the addition of a fenced playground on the front of the building, as well as a modern playground area to the back of the all-purpose room. None of these changes have a significant impact on the building's integrity. Overall, the Northside Elementary School retains the characteristics of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling and association.

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Northside Elementary School
Name of Property

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SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMARY

The Northside Elementary School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with mid-twentieth-century improvements in educational facilities in Blackwell, Kay County, Oklahoma. The school was the fourth educational building completed as part of a fifteen year plan developed by the architectural firm of Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associated for the elementary schools in Blackwell. Due to two natural disasters which destroyed three earlier elementary schools, the fifteen year plan took only ten years to implement. Located on a newly acquired site, Northside allowed the closing of the Lincoln School and provided enhanced educational opportunities to the children living on the northwest side of Blackwell. As the fourth tangible major element that was put into use as part of the school development plan, the Northside Elementary School continued a wave of innovation in education in the community. The school is also eligible under Criterion C as an excellent example of mid-twentieth-century Modern style school design. The school differs from the other mid-twentieth-century elementary schools in Blackwell, all of which were designed by the famed architectural firm of Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates.

The period of significance for the school extends from 1955 through 1957. The period of significance begins when construction on the school began and extends to 1957, the year the ten-year elementary school building program reached its conclusion.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The community of Blackwell was founded in 1893 by a group of businessmen from Winfield, Kansas. The new town was named after Colonel A.J. Blackwell, an adopted Cherokee Indian on whose property the original townsite was located on. In 1893, the town lacked rail connections "...and had few natural advantages except an excellent agricultural territory." Within ten years, the town enjoyed transportation facilities linking it to the larger area and an abundant water supply. The largest industry at the time was the 300-barrel-capacity flour mill. This was augmented by a steam laundry, a machine shop and a brick plant. The central business district included twenty-eight, mainly one-story, buildings, although there were also one each two-, three- and five-story buildings.¹

While agriculture remained a dominant factor in the town's development through much of the twentieth

¹ The Daily Oklahoman, (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma), 27 September 1936. See also "Blackwell," n.d., (available Vertical Files, Research Library, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma History Center, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma).

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century, other natural advantages subsequently developed that also contributed significantly to Blackwell's growth. Blackwell's agricultural-based prosperity was first augmented in 1901 by the discovery of natural gas. In the late 1910s, the discovery of oil provided another major economic stimulus. Various related industries were soon blossoming in the town. In 1916, the Blackwell Zinc Company, a subsidiary of the American Metal Company Limited, was established. By the mid-1930s, other industrial concerns thriving in the area included the Globe Oil and Refining Company, the Hazel Atlas Glass Company, the Cushing Refining and Gasoline Refinery, the Blackwell Brick Company, the Acme Foundry, the Turvey Packing Company, the Blackwell Cheese Company and the Blackwell Mill and Elevator Company. With the city economically thriving, services within the community also reached new heights. In addition to the two rail lines operated by the Santa Fe and Frisco Railway companies in the 1930s, Blackwell was served by paved highways and a municipal airport. As such, residents could be a passenger on one of the seven trains or the ten buses that passed through the community on a daily basis or reach "...any point..." via special plane.²

Unlike many other Oklahoma communities, Blackwell did not experience a "mushroom growth." Instead, due to the "...steady increase in agricultural wealth and the location of...growing industries," the town enjoyed "...a gradual and lasting growth and prosperity." This continued to be true through the 1940s and 1950s as many of the same industries operating in the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s continued to function and even expanded their local facilities. By 1954, the Blackwell Zinc Company ranked as the community's number one industry with nine hundred employees drawing a yearly payroll of \$4 million. Other major industrial concerns included the Hazel-Atlas Glass plant which employed over 180 persons and had an annual payroll of almost \$800,000. The Acme Foundry and Machine Company held its own as "...one of the city's fastest-growing industries..." with 130 workers and a \$450,000 payroll. The Turvey Packing Company, at the time the state's largest independent meat packer, was also notable. In addition to employing 75 persons that "...pump(ed) a total of more than \$251,000 into local trade channels..." the packing plant materially boosted the agricultural prowess of the area by expending \$3 million for hogs and cattle produced in the area. New industries also continued to locate in the community. In the mid-1950s, the Cities Services Oil Company employed thirty-five persons who earned a total of about \$105,000 a year working at the Ambrose Gasoline Plant located two miles northwest of Blackwell.³

In terms of population, Blackwell, along with Kay County as a whole, continued to grow every decade of the first half of the twentieth century, except for the trying decade of the 1930s. At the time of Oklahoma's statehood in 1907, Blackwell's population stood at 2,644. Within three years, the number of residents had jumped to 3,266, nearly a twenty-four percent increase. More than doubling over the

² Ibid, 27 September 1936 and 8 August 1954.

³ Ibid., 8 August 1954.

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next decade, Blackwell's population numbered 7,174 in 1920, a 119.6 percent increase. Much slower than in the previous decade, only 2,347 new residents moved to Blackwell between 1920 and 1930, bringing the 1930 population to 9,521. Declining by just about a thousand residents, the years of the Great Depression brought Blackwell's population down to 8,537. Although not reaching its pre-depression heights, the 1940s resulted in a boost in citizens residing in Blackwell to bring the total number of residents to 9,199. Although one of the smallest increases in Blackwell's history, the 1950s brought a gain of 389 Blackwellians to a final 1960 population of 9,588.⁴

As part of its prosperous growth, the town initiated a number of community-oriented developments following the end of World War II. Some of the more visible projects included the 1949 development of a "pioneering" 100-home veterans housing project and the construction of the "...finest swimming pool in the southwest" which cost a staggering \$200,000 by itself. On a smaller scale, other community-sponsored undertakings included increases to the municipally-owned power plant facilities, the acquisition of two blocks of land for new Kay County Free Fair facilities, expansion of the sanitary and sewer system, the purchase of new fire equipment and the construction of a new year-round youth center. Blackwell's educational system also received a major, cutting-edge boost during this time of economic well-being and development.⁵

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

As a fundamental community entity, Blackwell opened its first school in September 1893. At that time, fifty-two students attended school in a small frame building. The school system continued to rapidly develop from that point with corresponding increases in students and betterment of facilities. However, the number of school-age population, defined as children age 6 years to 21 years, in Blackwell peaked in 1927 at 3,265. The number of school-age children then began to drop from there over the following years so that by 1936 it numbered 2,600. Blackwell students attended ten public schools at that time, including a new \$225,000 high school completed the previous year. The old high school continued in service as "...a modern junior high."⁶

Blackwell's school-age population continued to decline until a low of 2,016 was reached in 1944. At that time, the available school facilities in Blackwell consisted of eight school buildings, an administration building and miscellaneous facilities including a stadium and warehouse. The eight school buildings included two secondary schools, the high school building constructed in 1935 and the

⁴ Institute of Community Development, University of Oklahoma, "Blackwell, Oklahoma, A General Plan of Study," 1960. Available Bizzell Library, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 27 September 1936 and 5 February 1948.

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junior high which was housed in the former high school building erected in 1911. The remaining six schools were elementary schools ranging in age from forty-plus to ten-plus years old. Specifically, the six schools were the Washington School, constructed in 1900; the Lincoln School, built in 1911; the Park and Riverside schools, both erected in 1917; the Blackwell Heights School, apparently Blackwell's separate school that was built in 1923; and, the South Main School that was put together from "old buildings moved to the site" in 1930.

Faced with increasing concerns about the adequacy of school facilities and an upward trend in school-age population, the Blackwell School Board began considering plans to improve the school buildings shortly after the end of World War II, focusing first on the elementary schools. Although "...a topic of discussion for several years...", it was not until March 1947 that the school board took definitive action. Spurring this was the "Recent instances of falling plaster in classrooms at Washington Elementary School...", which "endangered" students. In response, the board selected the Oklahoma City architectural firm of Hudgins, Ball and Thompson to design a new building to replace the oldest Blackwell school then in use, Washington Elementary School. Due to an extra levy voted in previous elections for several years, the board had available a sum of \$110,000 for the new building. However, although the most obvious activity was the planning of a new school building, the school board was reportedly more "...interested in a city-wide school building program."⁷

Significantly, the board's action of engaging Hudgins, Ball and Thompson was not without controversy. It should also be noted that Hudgins, Ball and Thompson, later simply called HTB, was a notable firm in Oklahoma architectural circles. The hiring of Hudgins, Ball and Thompson in March 1947 was one of the last actions of the existing school board which was slated for replacement following the April 1947 election. The action was further "...made especially bitter because...in taking this step, the board refused the services of an architect who is considered by Oklahoma architects and the Oklahoma University school of architects as one of the two outstanding men in the U.S. in modern and progressive school design and planning." Although not specifically named, presumably the desired firm was the one eventually engaged, Caudill and Rowlett of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and College Station, Texas.⁸

The new Blackwell School Board, installed following the April 1, 1947, election, was headed by Dr. Phillip Risser. Somewhat confusingly, Dr. Phillip Risser replaced the previous member representing the "outlying" area, Paul Risser. The outlying area was the portion of the school district that fell outside the Blackwell city limits. Among their first actions at a special meeting called by Dr. Risser in mid-May 1947, the new board discussed plans concerning "...the school survey and building program, as to cost and contract agreements." In late June 1947, the board authorized Dr. Risser to engage the services of

⁷ The Blackwell (Oklahoma) Journal-Tribune, 12 March 1947.

⁸ Ibid.

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Caudill and Rowlett. Clearly proclaiming their intent, the board stated that they were "...convinced that the firm of Caudill and Rowlett was the best possible choice for architects in the planning and establishment of the best educational facilities in this part of the country."⁹

Importantly, the board-authorized contract included the provision that the architectural firm's six percent fee would be reduced by the cost of a survey of local educational facilities. The survey was to be conducted by the University of Oklahoma's Bureau of Educational Research and would identify what the city required "...in the way of modern educational facilities." As such, it was required that the survey be completed before the architect's undertook any of their activities.¹⁰

The contractual services provided by the firm of Caudill and Rowell also included four major professional activities: programming, basic design, working drawings and supervision. The programming component consisted of conferences with the board and survey committee "...to analyze the requirements and conditions of the building program." As part of this element, "An outline of the general program will be drawn up and diagram studies to establish solution to the problems of plan organization, structure and design will be made." The basic design component then involved "...the development of the basic drawings following the solutions established under programming and the completion in detail of the general program recommendations on construction, materials and equipment." As indicated by its name, the working drawings phase consisted of "...preparation of all necessary architectural and engineering specifications and details and the drafting forms of the proposal." The final service provided by the firm involved taking bids and advising the board on which ones to accept. Additionally, the firm as represented by Bill Caudill agreed to prepare the contracts after the bids were accepted, prepare supplementary detail drawings, check shop drawings, prepare models and shops and supervise construction. The last component also included "...counseling...the contractors on the proper execution of the work called for in the contract documents."¹¹

According to the local newspaper, at the time Caudill and Rowlett received the initial contract for the Blackwell schools, they had more than \$2 million worth of "...contract construction in the process of completion in Oklahoma." Caudill, a graduate of Central High School in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma A. & M. College in Stillwater and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was acclaimed in the Blackwell newspaper as "...a well-known author in the architectural field." Caudill's "Spaces for Teaching" received national recognition "...as the best source of its kind..." at the 1946 meeting of the American Institute of Architects in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Additionally, Caudill's research had been given international approval with the notification that the Royal Institute of

⁹ Ibid., 16 May 1947 and 25 June 1947.

¹⁰ Ibid., 25 June 1947.

¹¹ Ibid., 25 June 1947.

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British Architects considered "...his research on elementary schools the best of its type in existence." Although not as widely recognized, John Rowlett was a graduate of Texas University with degrees in architecture and education.¹²

In mid-October 1947, the Blackwell school board signed a contract with the Oklahoma Research Institute of the University of Oklahoma to conduct the survey of the local educational system. At the same time, it was announced the agreement with the architectural firm had been "correlated." The signing of the contract finally allowed the required survey to move forward. The delay in this action was attributed to problems in working out the details between the two firms. The survey work was to begin immediately and to be complete by October 1, 1948.¹³

At the end of November 1947, the study was underway with the administrative survey team visiting the various school buildings. The surveyors also met with the school board and architects. It was agreed that although new buildings were most needed at both Washington and South Main schools, the South Main School would receive priority because of worse cramped conditions and inadequate facilities. In early January 1948, another phase of the study began with a testing program administered to the local students by Dr. Henry D. Rinsland, head of the Bureau of Educational Research, and ten graduate students.¹⁴

Although the survey was not completed, the Blackwell school board began discussing possible locations for the new schools in early February 1948. At the same time, Caudill informed the board by letter that he, along with his fifth year design class, would leave for California in mid-March for a two-week inspection of schools. The west coast schools were considered to be "...the most modern of anyplace in the United States." Just days later, the Superintendent of Schools Harry Huston announced that the school-age population in Blackwell had increased 209 from the previous year to reach 2,237. The gain was partially attributable to the annexation of three rural districts, as well as "General population increases in the area." The census also enumerated pre-school age children for the first time in order to provide an idea of imminent future needs. The pre-school age count numbered an astounding 954 future students, almost one-half of Blackwell's existing student-age population.¹⁵

The final educational survey results were published in installments in the local paper beginning on March 11, 1948. The survey recommended six basic standards that Blackwell residents should strive for in developing their new educational system. These rather commonsensical standards included safe,

¹² Ibid., 25 June 1947.

¹³ Ibid., 13 October 1947.

¹⁴ Ibid., 25 November 1947 and 9 January 1947.

¹⁵ Ibid., 3 February 1948 and 5 February 1948.

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sanitary buildings free of all fire hazards and modern service facilities that met the needs of all boys and girls. The standards also called for facilities that allowed for a sound program of health, physical education and recreation in every day, sufficient available resource materials in the school libraries as needed by students and equipment to be used by individual children but which promoted learning and participation by all. Probably the standard that was most reflective of the time was the suggestion that "All space facilities (be) planned in terms of democratic processes of teaching and with due reference to the broadening needs of the curriculum."¹⁶

The following survey installments published over the ensuing days addressed the deficiencies in the physical plant of each existing school. In doing this, a history of each was also brought to light. The Lincoln School was built in 1911 on Blackwell Avenue, six blocks west of center. A significant shortcoming for the building was its proximity to the Washington School. According to the survey results, "There is no reasonable justification for having two relatively small elementary schools located within two or three blocks of each other." The eight-teacher building was deemed "...in a fairly good state of repair," although being found "...not adequate in terms of modern building standards." The building was further described as having "...some useful services left in it and may be continued in use for a few years." Problems with the building included the old fashioned heating system; poor lights; the lack of adequate room for kindergarten classes, library, teachers' lounge; and, insufficient room for "auxiliary facilities," including health room, indoor play space and auditorium. The less than two acre site was faulted with the note that the majority of existing schools in Blackwell shared this shortcoming.¹⁷

One year after the survey results were published, Superintendent Herron announced that Bill Caudill would be in Blackwell on April 4, 1949, to present the final plans and specifications for the Washington and Huston schools. Although not literally blowing these plans but having a significant effect nonetheless was the March 29, 1949, tornado that swept through Blackwell in the very early hours of the morning. Damage was quickly estimated at \$300,000 and included destruction of the existing South Main School. Within days, a plan was worked out to bus the South Main students to other undamaged, local schools, primarily Park and Riverside.¹⁸

As previously planned, the architects presented the final plans for the two schools to the board on April 4, 1949. Within days, bids were called for both buildings but, for obvious reasons, construction priority was placed on completing the new Huston School. As put to the contractor, the project involved both buildings and bids were to be received by the end of the month. Bidding a low figure of \$324,556, the

¹⁶ Ibid., 11 March 1948.

¹⁷ Ibid., 15 March 1948.

¹⁸ Ibid., 27 March 1949, 30 March 1949, 1 April 1949 and 5 April 1949.

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Hoke Construction Company of Stillwater was awarded the school building contract on April 26, 1949. Construction then was set to start immediately on the Huston School with a contracted completion date of September 1, 1949. No start date was set for the Washington Elementary School but the new building was to be finished by November 15, 1949.¹⁹

Ground was broken for the Washington and Huston schools in May 1949 with the Huston School being completed in early October 1949 and the Washington School in late December 1949. Five years later, the Blackwell school board invited the architectural firm of Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates to design additional classrooms for the Huston School. The addition was necessary because, as pointed out by the board, the Huston School was not "completed" at the time of its construction and, due to the rapid growth in that section of town, the school would soon be overcrowded. The board anticipated that construction on the addition would begin in the spring and that the new work would be "...in keeping with the style of the present structure (while) incorporating any new ideas which teachers and board of education members believ(ed) feasible."²⁰

Significantly, at the same November 1954 meeting, the school board made plans to take out a master insurance policy for all school property, except for wood structures. The "master policy" would expedite handling and payment of premiums. By the start of the New Year 1955, the board had a \$1 million policy on all the brick school buildings in Blackwell. Other policies covered school buses, the boilers at the junior and senior high schools, the wooden annexes at Lovett Junior High and Lincoln School and the entirety of the still frame Heights School.²¹

Development of the Huston School addition was progressing in January 1955 with the final plans anticipated within a short time. This time, instead of Bill Caudill, the plans were presented by John Rowlett of Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates. The final plans were accepted by the board at their February 7, 1955 meeting with the bids to be advertised by the middle of the month. The addition consisted of the building of two classrooms on the east end of the existing north wing. Notably, the board members "...pointed out that a third wing may be added to the school if an increase in population in the south part of the city necessitates added space." The bids were opened as planned on March 8, 1955 and the contract awarded to the John J. McAnaw Jr. Construction Company of Bartlesville. Work on the addition's foundation was underway by early May 1955.²²

However, once again, Mother Nature swept through Blackwell with a destructive force. The May 25,

¹⁹ Ibid., 6 April 1949 and 27 April 1949.

²⁰ Blackwell Journal-Tribune, 2 November 1954.

²¹ Ibid., 2 November 1954 and 4 January 1955.

²² Ibid., 4 January 1955, 8 February 1955, 16 February 1955, 8 March 1955, 3 May 1955 and 22 July 1955.

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1955 tornado devastated eighty city blocks and left almost twenty dead with more than 150 injured. Among the casualty buildings were both the Riverside and Park schools. The damage to Riverside was quickly assessed as unrepairable but the verdict was out on the Park School until the building could be further evaluated. However, unlike in 1949 when effort was made to construct the replacement building in time for the next school term, it was quickly predicted that the grounds could be not cleared and a new consolidated building constructed by the start of the 1955-1956 term which was just three months away.²³

As the clean-up began, various efforts were made by state and federal agencies to provide aid to the community. Among these was the state bill sponsored by Representative Raymond Craig and Senator Roy Grantham to direct the State Board of Affairs to sell prison-made brick at cost to the school district or city of Blackwell for use in rebuilding the school buildings. Governor Gary signed the act in June 1955. At the end of June 1955, it was announced that the school district would receive \$69,877 for wind damage through its new \$1 million master policy taken out just months before. The majority of the insurance money, \$60,000, was for the damage done to the Park and Riverside schools. The remaining almost \$10,000 was for damage at the Huston, Washington, Lovett Junior High and Blackwell High schools. The district also made an application to the federal Civil Defense Administration for monies to help rebuild the damaged buildings.²⁴

Three construction engineers and architects inspected the two damaged schools and in written statements indicated to the school board that the buildings could not be safely repaired. Because "...children are too precious to house in unsafe buildings..." the school board began to make plans for a study to determine the best way to solve the building crisis. This included looking at temporary facilities to meet the imminent need of the 1955-1956 school year. Superintendent Herron talked with church spokesmen and city officials about locating enough space to accommodate the students. Along with various churches, the city indicated that the fairgrounds buildings and pavilion would likely be available for use by the district.²⁵

At their July 1955 meeting, the school board voted to engage the services of Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates to undertake a preliminary rebuilding survey. Definite plans had to wait until the board received word concerning the Civil Defense Administration application. However, the preliminary plans would lay the ground work for the eventual required work. Plans were also made to begin salvaging usable materials from the tornado-damaged buildings as soon as the liability insurance payment was received. The work was to be undertaken by male teachers and other school personnel not busy for the

²³ Ibid., 26 May 1955 and 27 May 1955.

²⁴ Ibid., 2 June 1955, 7 June 1955, 13 June 1955 and 30 June 1955.

²⁵ Ibid., 30 June 1955 and 3 July 1955.

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summer. Items to be salvaged from the condemned buildings included furnishings, doors, heating and toilet facilities.²⁶

In mid-July 1955, John Rowlett was a guest speaker, along with Superintendent Herron, at the local Kiwanis Club. The topic of Rowlett's lunch presentation was the current school situation. One possibility presented at the meeting, echoing the 1948 survey findings, was the consolidation of the Park and Riverside Schools. The new combined school would then be located on the existing Riverside site.²⁷

At the end of July 1955, demolition work was underway on the damaged Riverside building. The school system anticipated selling the salvageable building materials, including brick, lumber and doors, to the highest bidder. All of the salvageable equipment, including desks, chairs and tables, from both Park and Riverside were temporarily stored in the high school gymnasium. Arrangements had also been made with both the First Methodist and First Baptist churches to hold the various classes of the displaced schools.²⁸

In August 1955, two partners, John Rowlett and Herbert Passeur, in the firm of Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates presented a preliminary building plan to the school board. At the Riverside site, an eleven classroom building was proposed. Other elements of the building included an all-purpose room, principal's office and storage and mechanical room. The plans also contained "...a number of teaching aids and new features as suggested by a group of Blackwell teachers...". The building was expected to be complete in time for the 1956 school term. Along with the immediate building plans, the board also considered the long-range plans to replace the "old" Lincoln School as suggested in the 1948 educational survey. This would require acquisition of a new site a "...considerable distance north of Lincoln..." in order to better address the needs of students living in far north Blackwell. Additionally, as part of this plan, the Washington Elementary School would require expansion to accommodate some of the former Lincoln students.²⁹

By the end of August 1955, plans were well underway to conduct elementary classes in the borrowed facilities and construction was nearing completion on the Huston School addition. In early September 1955, the board of education decided to take a 30-day option on a seven acre site on Armory Street between Sixth and Seventh streets. The site was part of the board's building plan to address needs on the north side of town, specifically the overcrowding of the Lincoln School and the overflow of students from the former Park School. Additionally, the board identified a need to build additions on the Huston

²⁶ Ibid., 5 July 1955.

²⁷ Ibid., 13 July 1955 and 14 July 1955.

²⁸ Ibid., 31 July 1955.

²⁹ Ibid., 11 August 1955 and 12 August 1955.

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and Washington Elementary Schools to address overcrowding at those schools. In order to finance these grand plans, the school board called for a bond election to be held the end of September 1955. The amount of the bond issue was set at \$288,000 with the money to be used to pay for purchasing sites, erecting new school buildings, making addition to existing school buildings, buying furniture and fixtures for the new buildings and the additional classrooms and improving the school sites.³⁰

Moving quickly, the preliminary plans for the new Northside School were presented to the community by mid-September 1955. Also designed by Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates, the new building would include six classrooms, an all-purpose room, outdoor covered play area and outdoor covered corridor. As with the other schools, specifically mentioned was the Huston School, the new Northside building was designed to be easily enlarged by either classroom additions or an entire wing. Notably, the school was not constructed as originally designed. Early conceptions of the building had the all-purpose room situated towards the back of the classroom wing. As finally constructed, the all-purpose room was located on the east side.³¹

As the date of the bond election drew closer, the school board and local newspaper worked to bring the issue to the attention of the people. The board of education emphasized that the nearly \$300,000 bond issue was only half the amount the district could legally incur but the amount was "...deemed sufficient together with existing funds to solve the elementary school housing problems." Additionally, the board noted that the plans were "...in no way new but (were) merely carrying out a long term plan initiated in 1947 and 1948." Mother Nature had just hastened the schedule of school development by about two years. Lastly, the school board pointed out that the proposed plans were a permanent solution to a pressing problem which, in the end, would save the district from spending additional funds on a short-term, temporary fix.³²

With assistance from the local Parent Teacher Associations and other civic groups, the school bond issue was approved by a majority of 741 to 7. The school board immediately announced that they would advertise for bids on the new Parkside School in the next few weeks. The final plans for the combined Park and Riverside schools were expected from the architects by the end of October 1955. Planning work, including a contour map, for the new Northside School was also underway. The board anticipated that the plans and specifications for the Huston and Washington Elementary Schools would be forthcoming; however, the extent of the additions would not be known until the costs of the other projects had been determined.³³

³⁰ Ibid., 28 August 1955, 1 September 1955, 4 September 1955, 6 September 1955 and 8 September 1955.

³¹ Ibid., 12 September 1955.

³² Ibid., 23 September 1955 and 26 September 1955.

³³ Ibid., 28 September 1955.

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In mid-October 1955, John Rowlett and Wendell Locke of Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates presented the final plans and specifications for the Parkside School, as well as preliminary plans for the Huston and Washington additions. Approving the Parkside plans the same day, the school board made plans for a special meeting to be held November 15, 1955, to award the contract for the Parkside School. Correspondingly, the school bonds were put up for sale at an open auction on November 1, 1955. This method, new to the Blackwell School district, allowed the prospective buyers to "...engage in roundtable competitive bidding until a final "best bid" (was) secured." The winning bond purchasers were First National Bank and Trust Company, R.J. Edwards and Small Milburn Company, all of Oklahoma City, and Evan L. Davis of Tulsa.³⁴

Also at the first of November 1955, the school board accepted the two classrooms at the Huston School. Acceptance of the rooms had been delayed pending approval of some final construction details. Superintendent Herron indicated that students would occupy the classrooms immediately. In other business, the board decided to change the name of the planned school previously called Northside to Herron instead. The Blackwell practice of naming schools after the Superintendent included the Lovett Junior High, named for Blackwell's first superintendent A.J. Lovett, and Huston School. Provision for a special board meeting to study the new Herron School plans was made for the following week when the architects would be available as well.³⁵

At their special meeting the second week of November 1955, the school board approved the preliminary plans for the new Herron School. Changes to the previously presented plans included the addition of another classroom and relocation of the 40' by 60' all-purpose room to the east side. The school would also have a covered play area and "...a sheltered area to unload students arriving by car." While the basic arrangement of the building was similar to the previous-built schools, the new design also incorporated "...several advanced ideas." Among these, and present on the Parkside School as well, was the addition of skylights. The front of the building was to be landscaped with the playground area situated to the back of the building. Renderings of both the Herron and Parkside schools were made locally available at the Sears order office. The board anticipated that the final plans would be available for the Herron School within five to six weeks. Additionally, with the expected awarding of the Parkside contract the following week, the board indicated they would then know the extent of the additions that could be made to the Huston and Washington Elementary Schools. The new wings for both schools were already being drawn with the preliminary plans to be available in about three weeks.³⁶

³⁴ Ibid., 13 October 1955, 18 October 1955 and 2 November 1955.

³⁵ Ibid., 2 November 1955.

³⁶ Ibid., 8 November 1955.

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The Parkside School contract was awarded to the J.J. Reardon Construction Company of Enid in mid-November 1955. The low bid was in the amount of \$197,863 but two alternates, consisting of easel teacher storage units and kitchenette facilities, raised the bid to \$206,269. The company estimated the project would take 285 days which would allow the building to be complete in August 1956. The school board stated that the cost of the school was "...in line with construction done in recent years." They also noted that the classroom cost in the new building averaged \$15,800, which was below the general estimated cost of \$20,000. According to the board, prefabricated classrooms cost \$18,000 each.³⁷

The building permit for the new Parkside School was issued by the second week of December 1955 with work beginning on the building foundation the following week. At that time, an accounting of money received by the school district in relation to the rebuilding effort was made. While the school board spent \$5,713.12 on taking the old Riverside building down, it netted a total of \$6,367.24 from the auction of salvage materials from the building. The \$1,194.12 profit was on deposit in the district's name at the county treasurer's office. Notably, the school still retained both the Park building and site with no decision made for disposition of that property for several months. The district also received \$70,020.27 from insurance, as well as an additional \$78,750 from the federal Civil Defense Commission and \$38,719.99 from the annual building fund. All of this money was then supplemented by the \$288,000 bond issue. In late December 1955, the school district received word that the amount of federal disaster aid was to be increased by \$7,725, bringing the total amount to \$86,475.³⁸

With "Every effort...being put forth to speed the work and to secure the best possible facilities for the money spent," the final plans and specifications for the Herron School, as well as the Huston and Washington additions, were expected within thirty to forty days. However, within days of the 1956 New Year, the board announced that bids for the Herron School and the Huston and Washington additions would be accepted within the next sixty to seventy days. Progress at the Parkside School included "virtual" completion of the foundation footings and the first payment of \$17196.91 to the Reardon Construction Company was approved by the school district.³⁹

At a special mid-February 1956 meeting, the board of education approved the final plans and specifications for the Herron School and Washington and Huston additions. Bids were to be advertised for beginning February 23 with the bid opening to occur on March 8, 1956. The work on the building projects was to be done by early November 1956.⁴⁰

³⁷ Ibid., 16 November 1955.

³⁸ Ibid., 13 December 1955, 28 December 1955 and 6 April 1956.

³⁹ Ibid., 13 December 1955 and 3 January 1956.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 15 February 1956.

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A total of eight bids were made on the Herron, Huston and Washington projects. The lower bidder again was the J.J. Reardon Construction Company of Enid. The final contracted price for the construction projects was \$298,854. Notably, some of the interior finishing work and furnishings would "...have to be done as additional funds (were) available." Also, as proposed by the architect, the bicycle racks, retaining walls and the clock and bell system were not included in the final contracted price; however, conduit for the clock and bell system was included to allow for installation later of these features. Work on the Parkside building was progressing at the time with the changing season anticipated to speed work, along with the arrival of the "badly needed" steel.⁴¹

Work on the Parkside building continued to advance through May 1956. Additionally, the Reardon company was paid for materials delivered for the Herron School and the Washington and Huston additions. Through June 1956, the board was optimistic that the Parkside building would be complete in time for the opening of the 1956 school year. Landscaping of the school would likely take longer and cause some inconvenience for teachers, parents and students. The Herron School and Huston and Washington additions were expected to be done by early November 1956. Although a shipment of steel boosted work at the Washington Elementary School in mid-June, both the Herron and Houston projects were delayed by the steel shortage. With the foundation work at the Huston and Herron schools nearing completion, the delay in the steel shipments would bring work to a near halt.⁴²

By mid-July 1956, work on the Parkside School was moving along as men laid the tile floor and painted the ceiling. A limited amount of grounds work was also underway at Parkside. The Washington Elementary School addition was progressing as well with the workers laying brick around the outside. The deadline for completion of this addition had moved to the end of November 1956. However, due to the nationwide steel strike, both the Herron and Houston projects were at a virtual standstill.⁴³

In mid-August 1956, the district again received good news of an additional \$60,000 in federal aid for the rebuilding effort. The district also began accepting bids for the sale of the old Park School which required the winner to clear the site. As expected, the Parkside School opened to students at the beginning of the fall 1956-1957 term. A formal dedication for the building was held at the end of October 1956. Unexpectedly in mid-September 1956, Superintendent Herron resigned from his position with no published explanation. Lovett Junior High principal Leonard White was then appointed as temporary Superintendent with the appointment becoming permanent in December 1956. For unknown but obviously related reasons, the name of the Herron School was subsequently changed back to

⁴¹ Ibid., 25 March 1956.

⁴² Ibid., 8 May 1956, 20 May 1956, 12 June 1956 and 17 June 1956.

⁴³ Ibid., 17 July 1956.

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Northside.⁴⁴

Although several months later than expected, both the Huston and Washington additions were complete by January 1957. Students at the Huston School assisted in moving furniture and other items into the new wing on a Friday with classes finally getting underway the following Monday. Work on the Northside School was nearing completion by early February 1957, although no definite opening date had been set due to problems with a motor in a heating unit in the east wing of the building. Due to the school's location on the east-west highway extending through town, a new type of signal light was installed in front of the building to increase the student's safety. The signal would operate only during school hours. While seeming to contradict the previous effort to relocate the Huston School off a major thoroughfare, it was noted by the University of Oklahoma's Institute of Community Development that due to the location of highways and railroads in Blackwell, "...it would be impossible to locate elementary schools so that no child would have to cross a major traffic artery on his way to and from school." Students at the Lincoln School received the good news that classes would be dismissed early on February 13, 1957, in order to move the desks and chairs into the new Northside School. Classes would then begin at Northside on Thursday, February 14, 1957.⁴⁵

With the completion of the Northside School, Blackwell's elementary school building program was at a successful end. In mid-March 1957, G.V. Williams, a member of the state Education Department's Division of Instruction visited Blackwell as part of the department's accrediting of the Blackwell schools. Among other improvements, Williams "...praised (the) new schools and additions..." at the elementary schools. At the same time, the community was making plans for the dedication of the Northside School at the end of March 1957 that would highlight all the recent building developments of the school system.⁴⁶

In addition to resulting in modern, attractive buildings, the ten-year elementary school building program in Blackwell enhanced the educational opportunities in the community. The new facilities were more conducive to the "modern" teaching methods and styles. The clean, colorful, carefully designed classrooms also avoided the hazards of the old buildings, including poor heating, cooling, lighting and ventilation. With the expanded sites and covered play areas, the students were able to enjoy more recreational endeavors. Further, the community itself benefited from the new facilities as school houses have long been a place of gathering, both for education-related and non-education-related events.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 22 August 1956, 26 August 1956, 18 September 1956, 28 October 1956, 29 October 1956, 6 November 1956 and 4 December 1956.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 13 January 1957, 4 February 1957 and 12 February 1957. See also Institute of Community Development, "Blackwell," 53.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 17 March 1957, 21 March 1957 and 28 March 1957.

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ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Northside Elementary School was the fourth elementary school constructed in Blackwell as part of what turned out to be a ten-year building program. The school is noteworthy for its design by the nationally renowned architectural firm of Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates. The completion of the elementary school building program, however, did not end work at the Blackwell schools by the firm of Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates. Immediately after Northside, the final Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates elementary school in Blackwell, was put into service, the firm began working on plans for the high school stadium. That same year, the school board also purchased additional land for the purpose of constructing a new high school in the next five years. Taking slightly longer than that, the Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates-designed Senior High School opened in Blackwell in 1963. The firm developed plans for non-educational buildings in Blackwell as well, including a residence and a church.

The Northside School is architecturally significant for its Modern design within the local context. The Modern style buildings designed by Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates were clearly different from previous education buildings in the community. This type of school has been described as an "...inexpensive "dungaree" type school." In this type of school, money was not "wasted" on monumentality and expensive finishes. Instead, "...the architects have stripped them to clean essentials, made the needs of the child and the limits of a tight budget the yardstick for design." This, of course, did not mean that the schools did not incorporate some of the latest technology and amenities that were part of "modern" education. In addition to incorporating the latest innovations, the overall form of the school was noteworthy within the community. The open-air corridors brought not only fresh air but natural light into the students' day. The connecting, same level classrooms were larger, more efficiently heated and cooled and included ample storage, as well as individual water fountains and faucets. All in all, the mid-twentieth-century elementary schools initiated a new phase in modern architecture in Blackwell.⁴⁷

The progress of improvement to the educational facilities of the community is also reflective of the times and the fastest growing segment of the population. At the beginning of the Blackwell school building program, the Baby Boomers were just reaching primary school age. By the time, the four elementary schools were completed in Blackwell in the late 1950s, pressure was mounting on the high school to accommodate this wave of students. Correspondingly, the Blackwell School Board initiated a new high school, also designed by Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates, in the late 1950s with an anticipated, and accomplished, 1963 completion. Interestingly, the architectural firm's work also mirrored this shift. In its early years, Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates achieved fame for its elementary school design.

⁴⁷ "Schools for the Southwest," Architectural Forum: The Magazine of Building, (January 1952), 145.

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Over the decade of the 1950s, the firm became increasingly involved in the design and construction of secondary schools. As the years went on, the firm turned their attention to colleges and universities, again with a considerable amount of success.

While the four elementary schools designed by Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates in Blackwell are similar, each of the buildings features distinguishing elements. One notable similarity between all four is that they all utilized the "finger plan." This was probably for a variety of reasons, including the size of the site and the anticipation for expansion; however, by 1952 Caudill, Rowlett, Scott and Associates were also working with a compact type that featured a rectangular form with a wide, central, multipurpose area flanked on both sides with classrooms. This type of plan was used by the firm in 1952 at two Oklahoma schools, the Fairview School in Elk City and Washington Elementary School in Clinton. Additionally, the firm had developed a periscope design that placed two rows of classrooms on the same side of a corridor. This "novel" design was implemented in 1954 at the High School in Guymon with the driving force being the restricted size of the site.⁴⁸

The Blackwell schools themselves reveal a progression of design, particularly between the first two and the last two buildings. However, even the schools designed at the same time have certain differences. The Parkside School with two wings is larger than the Northside School, which only had one wing. Neither the Parkside or Northside schools have been added on to, so these schools are similar in size to the 1949 Huston and Washington Elementary Schools. As within any prototype, some improvements were made to the latter buildings to solve unforeseen design issues, as well as decrease materials requirements. While the Parkside and Northside schools cost more, this is attributable to changes in materials costs during the 1950s, rather than indicating a more expensive design.

The most notable change between the initial schools and the latter buildings was the elimination of the clerestory and the integration of the classrooms, outdoor corridor and play shed under a single big roof. To compensate for some of the loss of natural light of the integrated design, both the Parkside and Northside schools feature large, bubble skylights. Visible at a distance, the skylights add a slight space-age feel to the building.⁴⁹

The latter schools also had some unique elements which set them apart from each other and the earlier schools. At the Parkside School only, the parallel educational wings are divided into two units by the open-air corridor. The other three schools have single-piece, rectangular educational wings with the open-air corridor extending vertically along one side. The unusual design of the Parkside School allows

⁴⁸ "Two Space-Saving Schools," *Architectural Forum* (March 1952), 136-141. See also "Three Schools...Three Approaches: 2. Periscope Classrooms," *Architectural Forum* (February 1955), 139-141.

⁴⁹"Southwest Schools," 147.

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the all-purpose room to be integrated into the overall design, rather than sitting by itself to one side as on the other schools. Also unique to the Parkside School was the large courtyard between the educational wings. The courtyard was a major design element with clear definition on all four sides. While both the Washington and Huston schools featured open space between the wings, the narrower, rectangular space is not a sufficiently commanding space to be considered courtyards.

The Northside School is set apart by the large covered play area in the center of the educational wing. While the other schools all included covered play areas, none were as big as at Northside. To provide light to the larger covered space, as well as along the east-west corridor and on the backside of the classrooms, are large skylights. The size of the play area was attributable to Northside's wider, side-gabled roof that covered the educational wing. The educational wings at both the Huston and Washington schools had fairly narrow shed roofs which limited the play area to the central open-air corridor. The Parkside School also had fairly narrow educational wings, this time topped by flat roofs. Again, as a result, the covered play area was largely restricted to the open-air corridor.

As the epitome of a Modern educational building that continued an educational and architectural course for the community, the Northside Elementary School merits recognition. The Modern style of the building not only augmented the educational opportunities of area students but also allowed them to attend school in buildings that stood out in the community. Gone were the inadequate, out-dated, drab schools, in their place set the latest in education-related architectural innovation.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

South 7 acres of East 21 acres of East half of Southwest $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 15, Township 27 North, Range 1 West, Blackwell, Kay County, Oklahoma.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries include the property historically associated with the school.

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PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to all photograph numbers except as noted:

Property Name: Northside Elementary School
County and State: Kay County, Oklahoma
Photographer: Cynthia Savage
Date of Photographs: 13 August 2008
Negatives: TIFF Files

<u>Photo No.</u>	<u>Photographic Information</u>
1.	Looking N
2.	Looking NE
3.	Looking SE
4.	Looking SW
5.	Looking NW
6.	Looking NE

The photographs were printed on an Epson Stylus Photo R2400 printer, using Epson Ultrachrome K3 ink and Premium Presentation Paper Matte.