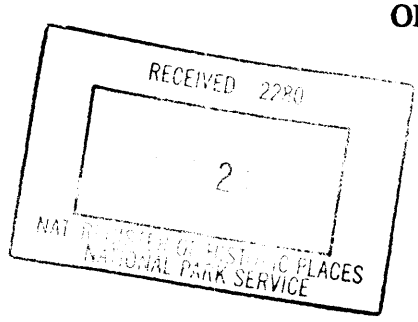
NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



879

1. Name of Property

historic name Tulsa Fire Alarm Building

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 1010 East 8th Street not for publication N/A
city or town Tulsa vicinity N/A
state Oklahoma code OK county Tulsa code 143 zip code 74120

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ___ nationally ___ statewide X locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official — Date 7-21-03

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
__V__ 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): _____

for E. Ball — SEP 2 2003
Signature of Keeper — Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- _X_ private
- ___ public-local
- ___ public-State
- ___ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
1	0	objects
3	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: GOVERNMENT Sub: Fire station

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
Cat: WORK IN PROGRESS Sub:

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)
MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
foundation CONCRETE
roof ASPHALT
walls BRICK
TERRA COTTA
other STONE: Limestone-Stairs

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

__X__ 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.

__X__ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

_____ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

____ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

____ B removed from its original location.

____ C a birthplace or a grave.

____ D a cemetery.

____ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

____ F a commemorative property.

____ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
COMMUNITY PLANNING
AND DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance 1931-1953

8. Statement of Significance (Continued)

Significant Dates 1931
1934

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

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Kershner, Frederick V., architect for Smith & Senter

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS)
_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_ previously listed in the National Register
_ previously determined eligible by the National Register
_ designated a National Historic Landmark
_ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
_ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data
X State Historic Preservation Office
___ Other State agency
___ Federal agency
___ Local government
___ University
X Other
Name of repository: Oklahoma Branch, American Lung Association

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property _____

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15	232000	4004490	3	__	_____	_____
2	__	_____	_____	4	__	_____	_____

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 Elizabeth Markes, graduate student, Oklahoma State University

organization consultant for Oklahoma Branch, The American Lung Association date April 7, 2003

street & number RR 2, Box 19A telephone (580) 758-3054

city or town Waukomis state OK zip code 73773

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name American Lung Association

street & number 2805 East Skelly Drive telephone (918) 747-3441

city or town Tulsa state OK zip code 74105

SUMMARY:

The Tulsa Fire Alarm Building is a one-story Art Deco style commercial building located at 1010 East 8th Street in Tulsa, Oklahoma between a newly developed residential area and Interstate 244. Designed in 1931 by Frederick V. Kershner of the firm Smith & Senter, the Fire Alarm Building is sheathed in buff brick and features terra cotta frieze-work that was based off of the detailing of the architect's award-winning Mayan Temple Design. It is note-worthy for its intricacy of design and its depictions of fire-related themes. The five bay façade of the fireproof building fronts north and is set behind a small lawn that is still in reasonably good shape. Directly south of the building is the Oak Park cemetery. An original garage, situated west of the building, duplicates the materials and design of the main building though with significantly less frieze-work. An addition to the garage afforded extra parking space for the building, but also connected the original building to a plot of land that, due to subsequent damming, eventually became a floodplain. Either its location in the floodplain or the backup of the city's storm drainage system are to blame for the flooding of the building. In spite of a flood and subsequent evacuation of the building on Memorial Day, 1984, the exterior of the building is still structurally sound. With the assistance of its new owners, the American Lung Association, the Fire Alarm Building can be restored to its former glory.

DESCRIPTION:

The Tulsa Fire Alarm Building is a one-story Art Deco style commercial building comprised of a square base inset with an octagonal plan, a flat roof, and five north facing bays. Because the building was intended to house all of the central alarm equipment for the Tulsa Fire Department, it was imperative that it be fire proof in construction. In the event of a rapidly spreading citywide fire, the machinery that was used to distribute all of the alarms needed to be safe. To the west of the Fire Alarm Building is a flat roofed, brick garage that has a more simplistic design motif.

The main building's foundations, internal columns, floor structure and lower roof structure are of reinforced concrete. The exterior masonry is comprised of a limestone base (below the main floor level) and buff face brick body with terra cotta trim. Located at 1010 East 8th Street in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the Fire Alarm building is positioned between a newly developed residential area and Interstate 244. The five bay façade fronts north and is set on a small lawn that features a large concrete flagpole base, centered in front of the entry. A chain-link fence for security encloses the lawn. Directly south of the building is the Oak Park cemetery. An original garage, situated west of the building, duplicates the materials and design of the main building though with significantly less frieze-work. An addition to the garage in the 1960s afforded extra parking space for the building, but also connected the original building to a plot of land that, due to subsequent damming, eventually became a floodplain. In spite of a flood and subsequent evacuation of the building on Memorial Day, 1984, the exterior of the building is still structurally sound.

The Fire Alarm Building fronts north and sits approximately 100 feet from the road. "The composite exterior masonry veneer is comprised of a limestone base (below the main floor level) and face brick body with terra cotta trim."(1) It consists of five bays from east to west and five bands of material changes from bottom to top. The lowest band is

1 BNIM structural report, 20 October 1999, 2.

composed of 1'-0" x 2'5" x 4" blocks of gray Indiana Limestone set in a running bond. The blocks are stacked 4 high with the first and the fourth row being cut in half. Therefore, the total height of the stack is 10'-0" high.

The next band of the façade is covered with a face brick that is a consistent 'buff' color with a wire-cut velour texture face. The units are a traditional 8' wide x 2 ¼" high x 3 ¾" deep laid with ½" joints, in a common bond, with 6th course Flemish headers; pattern (8 ½" horizontal x 8 ¼" vertical modules.)"(2) This band also encompasses the windows. The next band on the front façade from bottom to top is the terra cotta frieze in a subtly mottled cream color. This ring has a main reoccurring theme—of a double-headed dragon. These were used often in Mayan and related cultures, to conjure the power of the earth and as symbols of calamities. Frederick Kershner used his prize-winning design of a Mayan Temple for the Beaux Arts Institute of New York as the impetus for his frieze-work in the Fire Alarm Building.

From east to west, the first and second bays support this design scheme of buff brick and terra cotta frieze with the first one holding one window and the second housing two. The main entrance is located in the third bay. Two limestone pilasters flank the doors. "The main entrance and vestibule doors, probably the most historically significant doors, are missing...The frames for these doors remain in place and appear to be a cast iron with the residue of some sort of lacquer finish."(3) Rising up to meet the front entryway are the original limestone stairs. Originally, these were crowned with matching deco-style lanterns that were massive in size. Unfortunately, since the abandonment of the building and subsequent looting, the lanterns are no longer in their original place. One of the lamps is now located in the second floor lobby of City Hall, the other one is in the possession of a local Tulsa collector. (4) Illustrating his Beaux Arts background, Kershner used a standard symmetrical design on the front façade with the fourth bay having two windows and the fifth bay having one.

The existing windows are steel frame with casement or top-hinged out-swinging sash, exterior putty glazed with no existing glass panes [and in-swinging hopper windows on the bottom.] [They] have limestone lintels above, supported by steel angles, with limestone lug sills below.

The terra cotta panel above the main entry door in the third bay is the most elaborate. It is of an "Adonis-type male, stripped to the waist, with Gamewell alarm tape running through his hands. Flanking him from behind are two helmeted firefighters."(5) Again, the two-headed dragon is shown here connected to stylized hoses with the nozzles appearing as their heads. However, these dragons are somewhat more detailed and less stylized than the dragons in the other frieze work around the building. It has been suggested that "lightning bolts radiating from the central figure suggest speed and energy."(6) However, upon closer inspection of the front door header in comparison with pictures of the Gamewell logo (the machinery brand that was once contained in the building), it is clear that there are four lightening rods coming out of each of the figure's hands. This is the same pattern that the Gamewell Company has used since its inception as its trademark. The original frieze work has the man's hand positioned in the same way that the fist in the trademark is positioned further, pointing to the original intent that the lightening bolts are indicative of the Gamewell logo. This motif is again repeated in a bigger form around the figure's head. While there is no fist connected to this set of bolts, it

2 *Ibid.*
3 *Ibid*, 3.
4 Email from former Fire Chief Bill Goswick, 16 December 2002.
5 The Junior League of Tulsa, *Tulsa Art Deco: An Architectural Era 1925-1942* (Tulsa: Junior League of Tulsa Publications, 1980), 112-114.
6 *Ibid.*

still strongly resembles the original Gamewell trademark. Further promoting the Gamewell Company, flanking the central panel, are terra cotta plaques of Gamewell alarm boxes. Another layer of the blond brick atop the stylized frieze is capped with a layer of terra cotta dentil molding.

The east side of the building has three windows—two set in the primary façade and one in the recessed façade. The back three sides of the inset octagon dominate the south façade of the building. From left to right, there is a window on the recessed façade that mimics the form of the previously described out-swinging sash with in-swinging hopper windows. The next three bays are identical to one another with three windows on each of the three back sides of the inset octagon. A contributing element on this façade is the use of four gargoyle-like sculptures topped with a hatchet and flanking either side of all nine windows. Each side of the octagon mimics this same layout. All of these windows have their glazing removed and consequently have boards covering them. The west side of the building echoes the front façade with its buff colored brick and terra cotta friezes. From left to right, it holds three windows on the primary façade and one window on the recessed façade. These windows were originally of wired glass to prevent further damage in the event that something exploded or ignited in the proximate garage addition.

The glazing in the exterior original octagonal skylight is wired glass, but there is a significant amount of leaking currently in the building under wet conditions. The decorative interior glazing of the skylight has been removed although the frame in which it was contained still hangs intact in the rotunda. The American Lung Association intends to reinstall the original skylight glass, which is currently in the possession of the former owner.

The high roof of the octagonal central room that is not original is framed with two structural steel truss girders and beams. The roof deck is some type of composite sheet supported on light gauge metal purlins. Around the perimeter of the octagon, the decking has been replaced. Originally, the ceiling was made of gypsum. The inset octagon is forty feet high, but the ceiling was dropped to approximately twenty feet in the 1960s because the skylight made the building unbearably hot. (7) Since then, the dropped ceiling has been removed, but the evidence of the dropped ceiling and placement of acoustical panels over the existing walls can still be seen today in the remaining adhesive spots on the walls.

This central room held the main switchboard of the large Gamewell machinery. Around the perimeter starting from the west side are a Terminal Room that housed the incoming cables from Downtown and the rest of Tulsa, the Lunch Room, Radio Room, Assistant Superintendent and Drafting Room, the Vestibule, the Superintendent's Office, the Passage that leads down to the basement, a Toilet, and a Storage Room. (8) All of these rooms with the exception of the central octagon still have their original flooring. The main rotunda's flooring had to be removed because it consisted of black and white asbestos linoleum tiles.

Half of the basement is original to the building and half of it was hand-dug later. The second excavation was so thoroughly done though that piering had to be done in the basement in order for the foundation to hold. A large generator was also housed in the basement built in a rubber room that was contained within another room so that the vibrations of the machinery would not threaten the stabilization of the building. The Basement also housed the Cable

7 Stephen Eberle, interview by author, Tulsa, Ok., 21 March 2003.
8 1931 Floor Plan Drawings, Original blueprints and as-builts owned by Oklahoma Branch of the American Lung Association.

Vault, Microwave, Radio, Lunch, Relay, Operator's, and Battery Rooms. (9) The Fire Alarm Building had the only licensed still in the state of Oklahoma that they used to distill water for batteries. (10)

Ironically, although the Fire Alarm Building was lauded as Tulsa's most fire resistant structure, the equipment it housed had such dangerously expansive wiring systems that frequently the machines burst into flames and the staff were forced to throw sand on the equipment to extinguish the fires. Once the offending fire was out, the operators would turn off the equipment and let it cool down before using it again. The interior of the building houses several indentions around the edge of the main rotunda that were used to hold boxes that contained fine white sand. Today, the evidence of this practice is only in the dinginess on the original wall surface around these wall indentions.

There are four colors of the flooring that repeat themselves throughout the building--Light gray, black, rose, and white chipped tile. The main room originally had black and white checker-patterned linoleum that has been removed because of its asbestos content. Other historic features of the building that are still present in the interior today are some of the finishes in the entryway. Most of the original terrazzo flooring and marble wainscoting are still intact in the entryway. A vaulted plaster ceiling with decorative crown moulding is close to its original state and would contribute to the overall historic significance of the building.

Although it has significantly less detailing than the main building, the garage does still exist and mimics the main building in detailing and style. The only terra cotta that is present is in small decorative lintels above the windows and doors. These, coupled with the blond brick exterior help the garage to blend nicely with the other building.

The front façade has three windows and an overhead garage door. Above the garage door is terra cotta ornamentation that repeats the hatchet motif that is used around the top of the inset octagon of the main building. Over each of the windows, the terra cotta is of abstract flowers shooting out water much like a fire hose would. The west façade holds three garage doors. From this side, one can see the addition to the garage that was made in the late 1960s. The addition comes off of the south side of the building and employs the same blond brick found on the original garage. However, there is a prominent absence of any terra cotta detailing on either the west or south facades of this addition. The roof of the entire garage is flat with chimney being the only break of this plain. This garage addition was built in what would later become a flood plain and would eventually trigger the flooding of the Building and its present vacancy.

In spite of the flood that forced evacuation, the Fire Alarm Building still stands remarkably intact. Its unique terra cotta frieze-work makes it significant for their architectural contribution historically. Consequently the building is eligible for the National Register under Criteria C for its contribution to the field of Art Deco detailing in Tulsa in the 1920s and 30s. Although it is small, this building is a special treasure for the city of Tulsa not only for its uniqueness in detailing and style in its own right, but also for its place in the history of Tulsa Art Deco buildings.

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9 As Built Floor Plans
10 Stephen Eberle.

SUMMARY:

The Tulsa Fire Alarm Building is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for its association with community planning and development as it manifested itself in the beginnings of the fire protection field in the Midwest. Originally the city of Tulsa constructed the building to make it possible for all fire alarms to go into one main station. From there, the firemen at the building could alert the appropriate firehouse of the location of the fire. By installing this system, Tulsa fulfilled one of two requirements that enabled her to obtain a lower fire insurance class rate. From its initial inhabitation in 1934 to its vacancy in 1984, the Building acted as the alarm center for the city of Tulsa. The Tulsa Fire Department was the first in the State of Oklahoma to install the Gamewell Alarm system—the most famous in the industry—comparing favorably with the rest of the Midwest in the timing of that installation. The building is also eligible under Criterion C for its complete and elaborate terra cotta detailing that make it one of the most striking in the catalogue of Art Deco buildings that were prevalent in the city of Tulsa during the twenties and thirties.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Historically, fire protection in Colonial and early American cities was provided by private services. Fire in America was much more of a concern than it was in Europe. European cities traditionally used much less wood in the construction of buildings; here, in North America where vast forests provided a seemingly inexhaustible source of wood, timber frame, and later balloon frame buildings sheathed in wood became the cheapest, most expedient, and most common types of buildings. Fires that wreaked havoc on towns and cities were not uncommon. In the early 19th Century, cities and towns along the east coast began to develop fire protection services of their own, eliminating the competitive and cumbersome practices of the private fire protection services.

While the settling of new towns in the Midwest such as Cleveland and Chicago was occurring, it was commonplace to put into action some sort of small fire protection entity within the new town. These fire brigades usually consisted of two to five men and a simple system of leather buckets and water reservoirs located strategically around the town. From the middle of the nineteenth century to the turn of the twentieth century, towns became more populated as the nation became more urbanized. Developers employed quick building practices that usually included construction with pine boards or whatever the native wood was. As a result, fire remained a constant threat and as the cities grew, the threat increased. The rudimentary fire brigades were unable to stop a fire once it broke out in a concentrated area of town. Fire decimated large portions of many towns when they were just being settled and even later, after they had become established. The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 is an example of these new fire brigades' inability to combat a large fire. In Oklahoma, fires decimated many towns in the decades surrounding statehood. For example, in Enid on July 12, 1901, a fire broke out in the heart of downtown. It ripped through the area and the only thing that squelched the fire was the dynamiting of the St. Joe's Hotel that was in the path of the fire and set for certain doom anyway. In essence, this practice of dynamiting a doomed building created a fire hole that would curtail future damage of a devastating fire. (11)

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11 History of the Enid Fire Department.

In Tulsa this pattern was the same. Tulsa was an Indian village in 1880, but was growing rapidly. In 1897 (one year before Tulsa became an incorporated city), a large fire broke out on Main Street. Although the townspeople hurried to the rescue with blankets and buckets, the town incurred significant damage. Because of this fire, it was decided to start a private organization to fight fires. In 1900, a group of men gathered at Bynam's General Store to discuss the need for some measures to be taken to protect against another devastating fire. The group helped usher in significant changes to Tulsa's water system as well as establish a basic hose system to help mitigate the effects of future fires on the new settlement. In 1901 they received their first call to fight fire. While they were not able to save the building, they earned respect among the businessmen of the area because no surrounding buildings were destroyed this time. This earned them the support of the city government as well and in 1905, provisions were made by the city government to further equip the new Fire Department and make them a government-supported entity. For five years, from 1905 to 1910, the new Fire Department was housed in the Hall Building, sharing occupancy with the City Clerk, the City Council, and a somewhat escape-prone jail in its basement. Soon, people realized the necessity of an alarm system for a successful fire department. "On November 16, 1905, the City Council provided for the installation of the latest improved electric fire alarm and the erecting of a tower on the top of the building to house a fire bell to be donated by George A. Bayne. The bell weighed 2,060 pounds, was fifty-four inches in diameter, and was six feet high."(12) Prior to that, "in about March 5, 1905 installation was begun on the new Gamewell Fire Alarm Box System. This was the best equipment in existence."(13)

TECHNOLOGY CONTEXT:

The nascent stages of the Gamewell Fire Alarm's history can be traced back to the invention of the telegraph by Samuel Morse in 1844. After his initial success, he explored other commercial uses for the technology, including the possibility of using the system to send and receive fire alarms with telegraphy. However, he "believed the most commercially viable use of the telegraph was for financial institutions and railroads."(14) Although the contemporaneous alarms to alert the firemen of fire (ranging from church bells to gun shots) were elementary at best, it did not occur to Morse that the problem needed to be rectified immediately. In 1850, New York developed a system of watchtowers that were connected to telegraph wires, enabling communication between them and later to the Fire Stations. Soon afterward, in 1852, Cincinnati boasted the first successful coal-fired steam-powered fire engine.

Also making an entrance in history that year was the first practical fire alarm telegraphy system in Boston. "The man most responsible for the system was not an electronic genius, but an obscure physician who never practiced medicine, but happily and everlastingly was devoted to dabbling in galvanic theories. Dr. William Francis Channing's name is today all but unknown, except to a coterie of fire alarm historians, but it was his ingenuity and persistence ...that resulted in the first fire alarm box and telegraphic system for transmitting alarms."(15) Channing eventually partnered

12 Tulsa Fire Department, *Tulsa fire department: 1905-1998* (Tulsa: IAFF Local 176, Tulsa Firefighters, 1998) 13.
13 Ibid., 14.
14 Paul Ditzel, *Fire alarm!: The fascinating story behind the red box on the corner* (New Albany: Fire Buff House Division of Squire Boone Village, 1990) 14.
15 Ibid.

with Moses Gerrish Farmer, an exceptional mechanical engineer in New England at the time. The two men successfully convinced the city of Boston to install a complicated system of overhead wiring and telegraph systems to alert Fire Departments and Police Departments in case of emergency.

Because the invention was revolutionary for the time and Channing was such a charismatic businessman, he was often invited to give talks on his new inventions. During one such presentation at the Smithsonian Institution, in March 1855, there was a stranger in the crowd—a man by the name of John Nelson Gamewell. Gamewell was a South Carolinian postmaster who also had a budding interest in telegraphy. Channing piqued his interest and Gamewell, who had had no intention of coming to Washington, DC to start a new business, returned home with just such an idea. Throughout the next thirty years Gamewell built up his company by finding the best engineers and inventors of the time, hiring them and buying out their patents on new inventions that would improve his alarm system. As a southerner and a Confederate supporter (though an abolitionist), Gamewell lost all of his patents to the United States Government after the Civil War only to regain them a few years later through a purchase by his brother-in law. Gamewell's acquisition of patents continually improved the fire alarm systems, but even the most modern piece of equipment could not overcome human error in the case of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.

The fire alarms worked because a person could pull one next to the offending fire and the Fire Department would go to the area where the alarm was pulled to fight the proximate fire. However, in the case of the Chicago Fire, the original observer ran past three boxes in his excitement and so when he finally reported the fire, it was a fair distance away from the disaster's origin. Even this alarm was not received at the fire station, however. Through a series of other mishaps, the Chicago Fire Department did not respond to the original fire until nearly an hour after the fire started. This catastrophic event for Chicago was not Gamewell's fault, but it did spur more inventions toward eliminating the possibility of human error—namely more recognizable and easier to find alarm boxes. (16)

Gamewell began to realize the fruits of his shrewd business and promotional practices in this era as well.

> During the decade from 1852-1862, only four systems were fully installed. This leaped to 40 systems from 1862-1872 and jumped to 62 systems from 1872-1882. As industrialization and other growth, with its concurrent fire problems mounted in cities, installations skyrocketed to 299 from 1882-1892 and another 359 from 1892 to 1902. After 1904 the Census Bureau reported some 764 fire alarm system in operation, including 37,739 fire alarm boxes (17) By 1910, Gamewell held a 95 percent market share, despite competition, some of it stiff, from about three dozen other manufacturers.(18)

TULSA:

Tulsa fits nicely into these statistics—even pioneering among the small towns of the Midwest. While it did not precede major cities like Chicago and St. Louis that both installed systems between 1851 and 1861, it did have Gamewell boxes before smaller towns in the Midwest. Its 1905 installation was done prior to Enid, Oklahoma (1908), Cape Ghiradeau,

16 Ibid., 27-30.
17 Ibid., 27
18 Ibid., 42.

Missouri (1908), Youngstown, Ohio (1914), and Cleveland, Ohio (1927). This correlation is important to the study because once a city adopted the Gamewell Alarm system, it had to provide a central area in which to house the main alarm receiving machinery. The Fire Chief for the Tulsa City Fire Department realized this need in his 1927 report—22 years after the initial 1905 installation of a Gamewell Alarm System:

> The [Tulsa Fire] Department of 1927 was rated among the best of the nation by the National Board of Fire Underwriters... The average fire loss per capita over the nation for the previous five years was $4.94. Tulsa was $1.58...[In order to maintain this level of success, the Department would have to install] 100 more fire alarm boxes against the 169 then in use; at least three more outlying Fire Stations; more fire hydrants; and a new Central Station. (19)

In 1934, Chief Pitts succeeded. That year "the Department moved into the fireproof, isolated and brand new Fire Alarm Headquarters, located at Eighth and Madison."(20) Other cities that constructed similar buildings as a result of the budding Fire Alarm technology were Aurora, Illinois (1894)(21), Boston, Massachusetts (1895) (22), Johnson City, New York (1899)(23), Piqua, Ohio (1904)(24), Enid, Oklahoma (1908)(25), San Francisco, California (1915)(26), and Ft. Worth, Texas (1930)27. Herman Koeppe designed Fort Worth's Central Alarm Building in the Art Deco style. It lacks the level of ornamentation and unique form of the Tulsa building in spite of its impressive seventy-foot tower surmounted by a cupola.

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19 Tulsa Fire Department, 53.
20 Ibid.
21 www.auroraregionalfiremuseum.org/history/afdhistory.htm. 1/27/2003
22 www.insulators.com/articles/bostonfa.htm. 1/27/2003.
23 www.jcfd.org/history.html. 1/27/2003.
24 www.piquaho.org/fire_history.htm. 1/27/2003.
25 History of the Enid Fire Department
26 *San Francisco Chronicle*. 11 July 1937.
27 Judith Singer Cohen, *Cowtown moderne: art deco architecture of Fort Worth, Texas* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1988), 70-71.

ARCHITECTURE CONTEXT:

The 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes that lasted from April to October of that year was to have a profound affect on architecture of the time closely following it. This Exposition, presented by the French, held some of the most cutting-edge designs of the day. The significant feature of this fair was that it, like the Art Nouveau style had in the late nineteenth century, completely rejected any historicism in design and decoration of the architectural feats presented. The style that it inspired—the Modern style of the time—would later be referred to as Art Deco. (28) Upon studying the pavilions from the Fair with their octagonal plans inset in square bases and South American-inspired stylized detailing in terra cotta frieze, one cannot deny the Fire Alarm Building's adherence to this new modern style.(29)

The city of Tulsa, anxious to keep up with these exciting building trends, embraced this new modern style. According to a 2001 Tulsa World article "Tulsa has about 60 art deco buildings, most of them constructed between 1925 and 1942. They range in size, complexity and prominence from Boston Avenue United Methodist Church to an old Cities Service gas station on 15th Street just east of Peoria Avenue."(30) These buildings along with such grandiose structures as the Gillette-Tyrell Building, the Philcade, and the Mincks-Adams Hotel still stand in Tulsa as a reminder of Art Deco's popularity in pre-Depression era Tulsa. The preponderance of Tulsa's Art Deco buildings and its signature terra cotta detailing earned her the nickname "Terra Cotta City" by the late 1920s.

ARCHITECTURE SIGNIFICANCE:

Frederick V. Kershner was born in McCurtain, Indian Territory, in the Choctaw Nation. He attended Oklahoma A & M (later Oklahoma State University), in Stillwater, Oklahoma in 1926 followed by training at the American School of Fine Arts in Fountainebleau, France. "After returning from the American School of Fine Arts in France, Kershner worked for Arthur Atkinson. He next joined J. D. Forsyth's firm and worked on the Marland Mansion in Ponca City, Oklahoma. In 1928, he joined Stanley Simmons and Horace Peaslee in Washington, D. C. Returning to Tulsa, he joined the firm of Smith and Senter. In 1935, he worked briefly for Donald McCormick before starting his own firm."(31)

Kershner's opportunity to design the Fire Alarm Building presented itself with the challenge of making a beautiful building that was becoming the style in Tulsa at the time as well as creating a usable design that would house the relatively new technology of the Gamewell system to fight fires. Another technological stride that would eventually affect architecture as well as the way fires were fought in the United States was the invention of the telephone. The effect of the telephone on modern technology and its subsequent architecture as it relates to the Fire Alarm Building in Tulsa can be seen in Irvin Ray Timlin's 1930 design for the Pershing Building—one of Southwestern Bell's Telephone

28 Patricia Bayer, *Art Deco Architecture: Design, Decoration, and Detail from the Twenties and Thirties* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1992), 37.
29 M. Roux-Spitz, *Exposition des arts decoratifs Paris 1925: Batiments et Jardins* (Paris: Albert Levy, 1925).
30 *Tulsa World.* 15 April 2001.
31 Tulsa American Institute for Architects web page: //C:\WEBSHARE\WWWROOT\tulsaarchitect\Architects\Kershner.htm. 12/17/2002.

Exchange Buildings in Ft. Worth, Texas. (32) Frederick Kershner's detailing on the Fire Alarm Building looks very similar to Timlin's design. It is interesting to note that Timlin also did the Southwestern Bell Main Dial building in Tulsa in 1930-33.

As Timlin did for the Pershing Building, Kershner used extensive stylized terra cotta relief and blond brick. Even the shape of the two buildings is markedly similar. The difference lies in the subjects chosen in the relief of the two buildings as well as the fact that Kershner inserted an octagon cutting across the top of the square plan. Timlin concentrated on the Classic Moderne stylized flowers whereas Kershner exhibits a stronger Mayan influence with his use of stylized dragons and gargoyles. Both changes that Kershner made were likely the result of him basing his frieze designs off of his previous, prize-winning design for a Mayan Temple that was submitted to the Beaux-Arts Institute in New York.

These double-headed dragon symbols that Kershner employed in the frieze work of the Fire Alarm Building are used often in Mayan and related cultures, to conjure the power of the earth and as symbols of calamities. The use of the Mayan and pre-Columbian detailing in Art Deco buildings may be the result of discoveries of such artifacts at that time. The two-headed dragon motif was found on the walls of the ancient city of Copan and the first published illustrated study of this site came out near the turn of the twentieth century as part of the *Biologia Centrali-Americana* (1889-1902) published under the aegis of the Peabody Museum. (34) By the time the Art Deco style was beginning to flourish in the United States, these archaeological finds would have been well known to the art community and subsequent use in the detailing of their buildings was imminent.

In his book *Art Deco Style*, Bevis Hillier offered another possible explanation for the prevalence of Mayan detailing emerging at this time. He suggests that while it is easy to pinpoint such common themes as the Egyptian influence in Art Deco architecture that came about as a result of the discovery of King Tut's tomb and Cleopatra's necklace, the Mayan influence is a more difficult field with which to forge a connection. "The influence of Native and Latin America was broadly prominent in the literature and cinema of the 1920s and 1930s, due in part to a series of revolutionary political situations and a tradition of viewing these cultures as sites for projected utopias, but it is hard to isolate a specific design link with European Art Deco."(35)

Another important feature that establishes the historic significance of the Fire Alarm Building is its extensive use of terra cotta detailing. Builders have employed terra cotta as a building material since ancient times. Its use as a decorative feature, however, was not a common practice until after the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. After the fire, the Chicago Terra Cotta Company was one of the few buildings that had escaped the ruin of the fire and subsequently received some large orders for terra cotta detailing from companies that were rebuilding. It was becoming increasingly evident that the original "fireproof construction" of stone, iron, and brick were not, in fact, fireproof at all. "Inspection of the fire ruins...showed broken bricks, crumbled granite walls, and twisted iron columns which had melted and given way."(36) The disaster forced the realization that all cast iron structural work needed to be protected "with a sheathing of fire clay,

32 Judith Singer Cohen, 68-69.
33 National Register Nomination, 1984.
34 Claude-Francois Baudez. *Maya sculpture of copan: the iconography* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 5.
35 Bevis Hillier and Stephen Escritt, *Art deco style* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1997), 37.
36 Sharon S. Darling, *Chicago ceramics and glass: an illustrated history from 1871 to 1933* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1979), 170.

terra cotta, or brick."(37)

In 1866 Joseph N. Glover pioneered the industry with his productions of cheap imitations of cast iron and stonework using inexpensive clay. He moved his business from Kentucky to the more clay-rich country of Indiana and it began to flourish in the sense of business opportunities, but not capital. Eventually, Albert H. Hovey and J. R. Nichols bought out Glover and in 1869 moved the company to Chicago where most of their business was located. This operation became the Chicago Terra Cotta Company. The men acquired several business partners and expanded the company. These new inventions along with innovative business practices led to the success of the terra cotta industry so much so that there were three major players in Chicago alone.

The industry was further bolstered by the fact that Louis Sullivan adapted terra cotta detailing on his building designs. "So many years had Sullivan made use, in his lavish decorations, of terra cotta in all its forms, that he had created for this material a fashion which had gone far to enrich its manufacturers."(38) Followers such as Frank Lloyd Wright were influenced by his work. This trend made its way as far south as Texas, certainly feeding the detailing of the Art Deco Craze in Tulsa. "By 1900 the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company (formerly the Chicago Terra Cotta Company] had become the nation's largest terra cotta producer, employing 750 workmen in a plant covering twenty-four acres."(39) The trade continued to grow with the post-World War I building boom of the twenties. "Tactile, fireproof, and economical, terra cotta proved ideal for executing ornate exteriors and throughout the Roaring Twenties all three Chicago terra cotta companies filled dozens of orders..."(40)

In 1927, the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company brought over six new French sculptors. This decision would change the face of the terra cotta industry forever. Prior to this, Congress enacted the 1924 immigration law that depleted the supply of European artisans in all fields. American craftsmen did not meet the company's standards, however, so they had to look outside the country for new workers. They could have chosen German artists, but their reason for choosing French artisans instead was two-fold; First, the Company officials did not wish to strengthen an already strong German Union; Secondly, and perhaps the decision that had greatest impact on the Architectural movement of the time, was that the French Artisans had shown, at the 1925 Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes, that they were the artistic force of the future. This phase in the terra cotta business ushered in the change from details based off of classical motifs of the Egyptian pyramids and Ancient Greece to details of "nature...reduced to its basic geometric forms. Flowers and leaves became flattened circles and triangles...Stylized American Indians, Mayans, Incas, Aztecs, and Egyptians occasionally appeared, but floral forms tended to predominate."(41)

Kershner worked with the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company in 1928 on the detailing of another of his Tulsa buildings, The Tulsa Airport. It is a logical conclusion, then, that he would have also used that same company for his detail work on the Fire Alarm Building in 1931. As of yet, the record of such a union has not been located. The Company did suffer major losses in the Stock Market Crash of 1929, as did its other two competitors. However, Northwestern managed to keep its doors opened until 1932. And, with the enactment of Franklin Roosevelt's New

37 Ibid., 170.
38 Ibid., 184.
39 Ibid., 185.
40 Ibid., 191.
41 Ibid., 200.

Deal Programs (here the Public Works Administration), Northwestern Terra Cotta Company managed to reopen its doors and rehire some of its workers in 1935.

The Fire Alarm Building is often referred to as an example of the PWA Art Deco style, but because of its date of 1931—three years prior to the inception of the PWA, it does not fit into this niche. It does share some of the same features of this style in its use of Indiana limestone, terra cotta detailing, careful construction and excellent supervision by the architect culminating in a building that has lasted for over seventy years. And, most important of the PWA similarities, the Fire Alarm Building was built when Tulsa was just beginning to slip into the Great Depression, and subsequently stood as a bastion of the public's need "for confidence in their government and an optimism for the future."(42)

The discovery of oil across Oklahoma signaled a construction boom in Tulsa and effectively softened the affect of the Depression. The new Art Deco movement, born in 1925 and, in 1931, was synonymous with big-city style invited community leaders to embrace it to build their new metropolis. Through the design of such Art Deco buildings as the Philcade Tower in 1930, the Gillette Tyrell/Pythian building in 1931, the Tulsa Union Depot in 1931, the Tulsa State Fairground Pavilion in 1932, Tulsa was making a statement at the beginning of the Depression that she was still standing. The Great Depression halted construction on the Gillette Tyrell/Pythian building at only three stories compared with the originally planned ten. Tulsa began to concede defeat, thereby ushering in the era of PWA Art Deco to take the place of the previously more extravagant styles of the twenties.

In spite of the downturn of the building industry of Tulsa during the Great Depression, the Fire Alarm Building remained open for another fifty years. The only thing that stopped it from being operational as the Central Fire Alarm Office was a flood in 1984. Up to that time, the Building was held in almost a sense of reverence by the Fire Department as a beautiful building that they could truly claim as their own. The upkeep of the building that they held so important is evident still today in the strong structure that remains even after almost twenty years of its being unoccupied. As a significant historic resource in the field of Art Deco architecture, the Fire Alarm Building contributes an interesting side note to the other pieces of Tulsa's Art Deco heritage. Hopefully, the original, well-detailed building with its deep significance—not only to the city of Tulsa, but to the state of Oklahoma and the Midwest region—can be successfully restored to its former glory and can once more be a source of pride to the people of Tulsa for years to come.

42 Idaho State Historical Society website www. Idahohistory.net.

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As Built Floor Plans

National Register Nomination, 1984.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

All of Lots Six (6) and Seven (7) and the East Sixty (60) feet of Lot Eight (8), and the vacated twenty (20) foot alley lying South of and adjacent to said Lots Six (6) and Seven (7) , and the vacated twenty (20) foot alley lying between the East line of said Lot 8 and the West line of said Lot 7 as extended South 20 feet, all in Block Four (4), OAKLAWN ADDITION to the City of Tulsa, Tulsa County, State of Oklahoma, according to the Recorded Plat thereof.

Boundary Justification:

These boundaries were selected because this is the property that was historically associated with the Tulsa Fire Alarm Building.