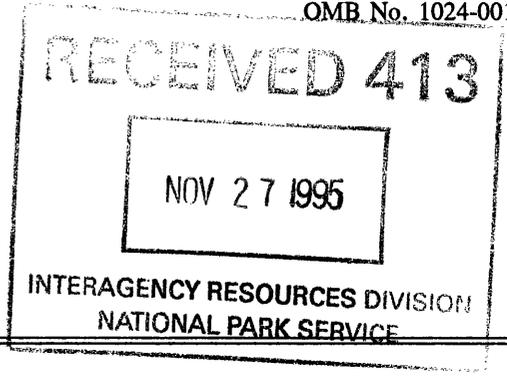


1498

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**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill Building

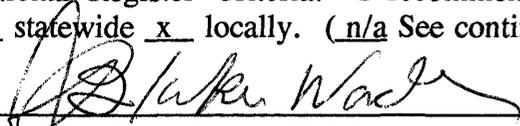
other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 322 Northeast 2nd not for publication N/A  
city or town Oklahoma City vicinity N/A  
state Oklahoma code OK county Oklahoma code 109  
zip code 73104

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

  
Signature of certifying official November 3, 1995  
Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

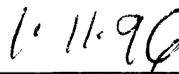
4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Entered in the  
National Register

Signature of Keeper

  
Date of Action

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5. Classification

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Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

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

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



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8. Statement of Significance

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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)

- 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)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK  
SOCIAL HISTORY  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1929-1945  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates 1929  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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8. Statement of Significance (continued)

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Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Slaughter, Wyatt H.

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Slaughter, Wyatt H.

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

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(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: N/A

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreege of Property Less than one acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>14</u>	<u>635540</u>	<u>3925930</u>	3	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>
2	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	4	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>
	<u>N/A</u>	<u>See continuation sheet.</u>					

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.)

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11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Kerri Robinett, Research Assistant, Maryjo Meacham, Associate Planner, John R. Calhoun, Associate Planner, Planning Department

organization City of Oklahoma City date August 7, 1995

street & number 420 W. Main St. Suite 900 telephone (405) 297-3908

city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73102

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Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

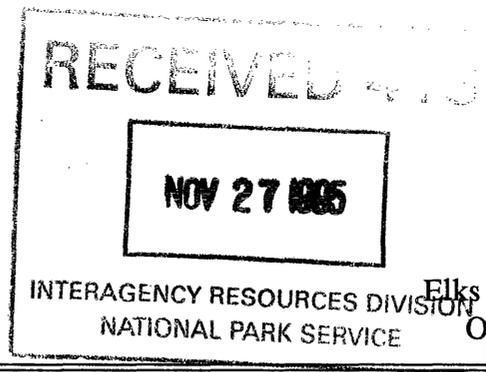
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

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)



## Summary

The Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill Building, located at 322 Northeast 2nd Street, was built in 1929 and is a two-story brick Commercial Style building. Located in the middle of the 300 block of Northeast 2nd Street, the building is one of the last remaining buildings in what was once the Oklahoma City African-American commercial district. The thirty-five-foot facade is divided into two storefronts with a row of metal casement windows above. An empty nameplate is centered in the stepped parapet. The side elevations were designed to be adjacent to one-story buildings and have few windows. The upper floors are lined with metal casement windows, identical to those on the front of the building. The Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill Building retains a high degree of architectural and historical integrity.

## Description

The Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill Building, located at 322 Northeast 2nd Street, was built in 1929. The building is typical of most Commercial Style properties and is thirty-five feet wide, approximately one hundred feet in length, and two stories in height. It is veneered in red brick with a decorative pattern of buff brick on the front facade. The buff brick is used to outline the parapet, decorate the pilasters and kickplates, and used as a beltcourse between the first and second floors.

The front facade of the building has two storefronts, each with large display windows and single entry doors. The single entry door which leads to the second floor is centered between the storefronts. The entry is covered with plywood.

The second floor of the front facade has four metal casement windows with cast stone sills. A simple stepped parapet tops the building with an empty nameplate centered near the roof cap.

The sides of the building are similar with one or two windows (covered with plywood) with brick sills on the ground floor and a row of metal casement windows with brick sills on the second floor. Near the center of the east side of the building is a five-foot setback and the remainder of the building extends an additional forty feet. The portion which is set back contains two windows on the upper floor with brick sills and a single door on the ground floor. The setback corner includes a non-original concrete-block enclosure which is believed to be a remnant of the demolished adjacent building. All openings are covered with plywood.

The rear of the building is symmetrically designed with two entries centered on the ground floor with single windows with brick sills on either side. The upper floor of the rear facade has a centered single entry door, a single window on the west side and two small windows on the east side. Remnants of an iron fire escape remain. All openings on the rear facade are covered with plywood. The rear facade also has a plain, stepped parapet.

(8-86)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
Continuation Sheet

Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill  
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

Section 7, Page 9

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**Alterations**

The major alterations to the Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill Building involve the boarding up of window and door openings. Some second story windows are broken. Although the Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill Building is in poor condition, it retains its integrity of association, location, design, workmanship, and materials and conveys the feeling of its past environment.

(8-86)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8, Page 10

Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill  
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

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### Summary

The Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill Building, located at 322 Northeast 2nd Street, is significant for its association with the ethnic/minority heritage of Oklahoma City and also for its association with Dr. Wyatt H. Slaughter, a prominent African-American physician. Built in 1929 by Dr. Slaughter, the second floor of the building served as the 'Rest' for the Victory Lodge of the Independent Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World (B.P.O.E. of W.), an African-American fraternal organization, for seven years. The building which housed the Elks Victory Lodge and Ruby's Grill stands as one of the few remaining testimonies to the community that developed on and around Northeast 2nd Street during a time of segregation and discrimination.

### Historical Overview

African-Americans have played a significant role in the history of Oklahoma City since before statehood. African-Americans first came to Oklahoma with displaced Native Americans, most, but not all as slaves. Although the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 granted freedom to the slaves in the United States, members of the Five Tribes who sided with the Confederacy ignored the decree. It was not until after the Civil War that African-American slaves in Indian Territory received freedom and land allotments as a result of the national government's treaties with the tribes. By government mandate, the new "freedmen" in Indian Territory would receive allotments of land and in some cases be adopted into the tribes who formerly owned them. Most received forty to one hundred and sixty acres and an 1860 census estimated the number of blacks in Indian Territory to have numbered 7,369.<sup>1</sup>

The desire of whites for more land, however, eventually led the government to open Indian Territory for settlement. One result was the famous Land Run of April 1889 that brought thousands of people to the borders of the territory in hopes of staking a claim. The group was diverse and African-Americans raced alongside white settlers for the chance to make a new start in the Unassigned Lands. A sense of opportunity and equality prevailed in the early frontier days when African-Americans as well as whites claimed land in the newly opened Oklahoma Territory, laying the foundation for a rapidly growing Oklahoma City. Soon, however, racial discrimination took hold and the African-American was economically, socially and legally segregated from the majority white population. Within these segregated communities, however, a distinct cultural, political, and economic landscape flourished, leaving a physical record of African-American contributions to the development of Oklahoma City.

The early territorial days were marked by an unusual sense of equality with African-Americans holding positions in the Territorial Legislature and other territorial offices. Although in Oklahoma City the African-

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<sup>1</sup>Franklin, Jimmie Lewis. Journey Toward Hope. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
Continuation Sheet

Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill  
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

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American population was fairly dispersed throughout the community,<sup>2</sup> territorial policy did call for separate educational facilities and in 1891 Oklahoma City opened its first black school with J.D. Randolph as principal. By 1905 black commercial activity in Oklahoma City began to prosper and the promise of opportunity seemed to hold true. Some African-American leaders thought that Oklahoma was the promised land for African-Americans and envisioned it as a future all-black state. This sense of frontier hope, however, came to an abrupt end with the 1906 Constitutional Convention led by "Alfalfa Bill" Murray that included Jim Crow laws to segregate transportation and schools and to prohibit interracial marriage. Thus with statehood in 1907, Oklahoma was officially transformed into a segregationist society.

By 1910, African-Americans in Oklahoma City numbered over 6,700, accounting for approximately ten percent of the city's population.<sup>3</sup> Several black neighborhoods appeared in the meander scars of the Canadian River and along the corridors of the Santa Fe and the Frisco railroads. While African-American commercial activity centered on an area along the western side of the Santa Fe tracks between Reno and Grand Avenues (now Sheridan Avenue), the "Near Northeast" side, centered on Northeast 2nd Street, began to emerge as the dominant African-American residential area with over half of the black population residing there.

Between 1910 and 1920, Oklahoma City's African-American population continued to grow - attributed more to natural increase than to immigration. The community began to focus internally on providing for its economic, social and cultural needs. Northeast 2nd Street joined the district along the Santa Fe tracks as a growing commercial hub serving the African-American population. Businesses were typically service-oriented and included restaurants, recreational facilities and professional establishments. The first edition of the Black Dispatch newspaper, serving as a voice for the African-American community, was printed in 1915 on 2nd Street.

In 1916 local residential zoning laws set Northeast 2nd Street as the northern limit for black development. Although only a year later such laws were found to be unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court, segregation continued in the form of restrictive covenants on plats and through agreements among white property owners and real estate operators.<sup>4</sup> In this manner, the northern boundary for blocks containing a black majority was moved to Northeast Fourth Street in 1918. This along with an oppressive social atmosphere succeeded in limiting spatial expansion, but not the dynamics, of the African-American community in Oklahoma City.

The 1920's were a time of general economic prosperity throughout the country and for African-Americans it represented the time of the "Negro Renaissance." Despite continuing discrimination and increasingly tense race

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<sup>2</sup>Edward J. Pugh. Spatial Consequences of Public Policy on the Evolution of the Black Community; a Case Study of Oklahoma City, 1889-1974. Unpublished thesis, University of Oklahoma: Norman, 1977.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
**National Register of Historic Places**  
Continuation Sheet

Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill  
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

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relations, their segregated communities thrived both economically and culturally. In Oklahoma City this was no different and Northeast 2nd Street became the center for almost all commercial and social activity.

In the late 1920's two nearly simultaneous events severely impacted life on and around Northeast 2nd Street. In 1928 oil was discovered in Oklahoma City in a field that ran directly underneath the Near Northeast community. Mineral rights were usually bought or leased from those living on top of this gold mine leaving them lower property values, danger from well fires, a scarred landscape, noxious and unpleasant odors, noise and increased insurance rates.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the Great Depression of 1929 brought economic hard times and migration to the city, creating an increasingly concentrated African-American population.

At a time when room to grow was needed most, Governor "Alfalfa Bill" Murray imposed his segregation line May 1, 1933. Only a year later, further racial zoning ordinances were passed. To nobody's surprise, such ordinances were found to be unconstitutional by the State Supreme Court in a decision that merely echoed that of U.S. Supreme Court nearly two decades prior.

By this time, the 300 block alone of Northeast 2nd Street was home to seven restaurants, two drugstores, three billiard parlors, two undertakers, five barber shops, three real estate offices, a cleaners, a theater, two taxi companies, two shoe repair shops, a shoe shine parlor, a lawyer's office, eight physicians, five dentists, two life insurance offices, a watchmaker, two tailors, a dance hall, a beauty parlor, two clothing stores, a grocer and a newsstand.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, almost every need of the community was served on this one street. It became not only a place to shop, but a place to interact socially and politically.

In the face of adversity, the African-American community rallied for their rights and continued to improve their position in an oppressive society. In 1934 the Federal Housing Authority was established. Intending to serve all races, the FHA policies nonetheless upheld segregationist policies. With this as an impetus, newer subdivisions were established, offering African-Americans in Oklahoma City improved housing conditions. Areas also became available further northeast in older housing that was being abandoned by whites in favor of the newer suburbs. As more options became available, Northeast 2nd Street began to decline - its fate further sealed with the completion of the Centennial Expressway in 1989. Not only was Northeast 2nd physically cut off from the community it once served, but much of the surrounding community itself was razed. Today only five buildings remain on the 300 block of Northeast 2nd Street.

### **The Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill Building**

The building which housed the Elks Victory Lodge, and later Ruby's Grill, was built in 1929 by Dr. Wyatt H. Slaughter to serve as the Rest for the local African-American Elks Lodge. The building served in that

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Polk's Directory of Oklahoma City, 1932.

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Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill  
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

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capacity for seven years with the Rest occupying the entire second floor and commercial spaces on the first floor.

On May 4, 1929, The Black Dispatch announced that Oklahoma City was to be the host for the fourth annual convention for the Middle Western Association of the Elks. The convention was to take place the 26th through the 28th of that same month with visitors coming from Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska, and Colorado. Meanwhile, guided by Dr. W.H. Slaughter, construction was underway on the new Rest for the Elks Victory Lodge #248 located at 322 Northeast 2nd Street. With music, parades, dances, and meetings the convention came and went, proving to be a huge success. "Sidelights" on the Elks Convention, however reported Dr. Slaughter's disappointment that he did not get the Elks Rest completed before the sessions.<sup>7</sup> He may have missed the convention, but on July 24, 1929, "Members of Victory Lodge marched through the streets of the city with banners flying proudly . . .," the occasion being the opening and dedication of their new Rest in Dr. Slaughter's building.<sup>8</sup> The dedication included an open house offering visitors a tour of the various rooms of what the Elks expected to use as a "center of comfort and enjoyment."<sup>9</sup> The evening was capped by a big dance.

In January 1930, thirty new members were initiated into the Victory Lodge during a ceremony at the Rest. The members inspected the Rest and "its various opportunities for enjoyment," were instructed in the "secret work of the Order," and were charged with bringing in a new member each within a month. An application for membership was to be accepted for the sum of five dollars.<sup>10</sup>

The Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill Building continued to serve as the Rest for the Elks through 1936. During this time, the Victory Lodge played an important role in the African-American community. Roscoe Dunjee, editor of The Black Dispatch, and lecturer of the Middle Western Association of Elks, testified to this when he wrote "There can be no disputing the influence for good exercised by Negro fraternal organizations in the forward trend of the race. Second only to the organization of the church, they have been the race's greatest expression of self-government."<sup>11</sup>

After 1936, the building at 322 Northeast 2nd became home to several restaurants and clubs. Most notable was Ruby's Grill, established in 1940 by Mr. Ruby Lyons. One of 2nd Street's most popular cabaret-restaurants, Ruby's Grill offered music, dancing and "fine foods which have made this night spot famous

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<sup>7</sup>The Black Dispatch, May 30, 1929.

<sup>8</sup>The Black Dispatch, July 25, 1929.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>The Black Dispatch, January 16, 1930.

<sup>11</sup>The Black Dispatch, August 15, 1929.

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United States Department of the Interior  
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Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill  
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

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throughout the state.<sup>12</sup> Because of its association with music and because of the importance of music for the Northeast 2nd Street community, Ruby's Grill has been called one of the three establishments most significant in the African-American culture of Oklahoma City.<sup>13</sup> A restaurant operated by Ruby Lyons remained in the building until about 1946. Ruby Lyons was the brother of Sidney Lyons, who built the house two blocks away at 300 Northeast 3rd (NR 1982 as Melvin F. Luster House).

One ground floor storefront of the building was occupied in its early years by a restaurant operated by Granville L. Scales, later by Grant L. Scales. The other storefront was a succession of barber shops, including Joe Mead and Levi and Leatrice Robinson.

#### **Association with Dr. Wyatt H. Slaughter**

Dr. Wyatt H. (W.H.) Slaughter, the earliest African-American physician who remained in the community, arrived in Oklahoma City in 1903. In 1908 he was founding treasurer of the Oklahoma [Colored] Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical Association (Me-De-Phar); he served as president 1923-24 and 1944-45.<sup>14</sup> He established the Great Western Hospital with Dr. W.L. Haywood and Dr. Daniel L. Moore. Over the years he also became respected as a businessman. In 1921 he built the Slaughter Building (331 Northeast 2nd, not extant), where he maintained his office. That building not only housed one of the most popular dance halls on 2nd Street (Slaughter's Hall, on the third floor), but also served as offices (second floor) and a pharmacy (Randolph's, first floor).<sup>15</sup> Dr. Slaughter is said to have designed the building at 322 Northeast 2nd, with the intent of housing the Elks Lodge on the second floor. He also financed other buildings on Northeast 2nd, including Dr. W.L. Haywood's purchase of 307 Northeast 2nd (NR submitted 1995). In 1954, Dr. Slaughter's estate listed 48 parcels of land, valued at over \$160,000. Included were five properties on the 300 block of Northeast 2nd (none extant), and his large homestead located northeast of Northeast 50th at Bryant, built C. 1937. Not included in the estate was the Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill building, which he had given to his daughter Saretta in 1930.<sup>16</sup> That building is the only remaining building on Northeast 2nd designed and/or built by W.H. Slaughter.

Currently, plans are underway to adapt the building to use as the Oklahoma African-American Museum.

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<sup>12</sup>The Black Dispatch, February 16, 1946.

<sup>13</sup>Charlie Christian and the Deep Deuce, 1994.

<sup>14</sup>Charles James Bates, "It's Been a Long Time" (and We've Come a Long Way). Muskogee: Hoffman Printing Co. Inc., 1986.

<sup>15</sup>Polk's City Directory.

<sup>16</sup>Oklahoma County deed records.

(8-86)

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Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill  
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

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Elks Victory Lodge-Ruby's Grill  
Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property consists of the west 10 feet of Lot 4 and all Lot 5, Block 15, Military Addition, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma and is 35' x 150' in size.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary includes the city lots that historically have been associated with the property.