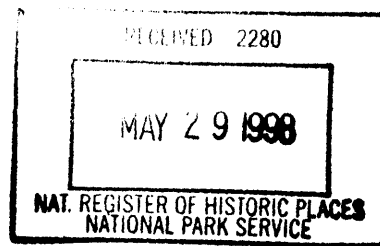


NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



734

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Okemah Armory

other names/site number Okemah National Guard Armory

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 405 North 6th not for publication N/A
city or town Okemah vicinity N/A
state Oklahoma code OK county Okfuskee code 107
zip code 74859

=====
3. State/Federal Agency Certification
=====

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this XX 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 XX meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally _____ statewide XXX locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] _____ 18 May 1998
Signature of certifying official 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): _____

[Signature] _____
Edson H. Beal 6/26/95

Signature of Keeper Date
[Signature] of Action

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 2 </u>	buildings
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	sites
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u>	objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 2 </u>	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: DEFENSE Sub: arms storage

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: TRANSPORTATION Sub: road-related

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Works Progress Administration

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

roof ASPHALT

walls STONE

other _____

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)

- 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)

ECONOMICS
MILITARY
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1935-1937

=====
8. Statement of Significance (Continued)
=====

Significant Dates 1937

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

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Nolen, Bryan W., Supervising Architect
Works Progress Administration, Builder

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
 State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Name of repository: N/A

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property Less than one (1) acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>14</u>	<u>744440</u>	<u>3924500</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u>N/A</u>	<u>See continuation sheet.</u>		4	<u> </u>	<u> </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.)

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Jill Marsh, Preservation Research Assistant

organization State Historic Preservation Office date March 6, 1998

street & number 2704 Villa Prom telephone (405) 521-6249

city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73107

=====
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 City of Okemah

street & number City Hall, 502 West Broadway telephone (918) 623-1050

city or town Okemah state OK zip code 74859

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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 9

Okemah Armory
name of property
Okfuskee County, Oklahoma
county and State

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SUMMARY:

The Okemah Armory is a self-contained, horizontal, one-story building measuring 109 feet by 130 feet and constructed of native stone. A local project of the Works Progress Administration in Okfuskee County, Oklahoma, the armory was constructed in 1935 - 1937. The armory property is located at 405 North Sixth, at the intersection of Sixth and Columbia Streets. The surrounding area is a combination of residential and commercial, with a WPA athletic stadium to the north. The armory's main entrance faces east. The floor plan is typical of WPA-built armories, in that the building comprises two distinct sections. A west section, with barrel roof, contains the drill area, while a flat-roofed east section comprises offices, supply and arms rooms, and a garage area. Though the massing is strongly horizontal, several architectural details give the building a vertical emphasis: the parapeted entrance bay with piers; corner pilasters; and narrow, vertical steel-framed multiple-light hopper windows in all elevations. The steel-framed windows are all original, as are the pedestrian doors. Alterations to the exterior have been minimal, with only the overhead vehicle doors replaced with metal doors. Interior alterations are also minimal: the stage at the north end of the drill hall has been partially enclosed with cinder block and serves as storage for the City Barn, which now occupies the building. The Okemah Armory retains a high degree of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to enable it to exemplify WPA-type military architecture in Oklahoma.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION:

The Okemah Armory is a self-contained, horizontal, one-story building constructed of native stone quarried locally. The building measures 109 feet east-to-west and 130 feet north-to-south. A local project of the Works Progress Administration in Okemah, it was constructed in 1935 - 1937. The armory property is located at 405 North Sixth, at the intersection of Sixth and Columbia Streets. It is surrounded by a residential area on the east, a combination of residential and commercial areas on the south and west, and by a WPA athletic stadium on the north.

The roofline of the Okemah Armory indicates that the building comprises two distinct sections: A west section, with barrel roof, comprises the drill area, while a flat-roofed one-story east section comprises offices, supply and arms rooms, and garage. Historically and presently, the drill hall roof is covered with roll roofing, while the east section is covered with tar and gravel. The

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north and south arc of the barrel roof, over the west section, contrasts with the horizontal line of the east section. The roof line, around the entire building, has stone coping. At all of the corners of the building, shallow pilasters buttress the corners, wrapping around the edge, and rise to become "towers." Near the top of the pilasters on the sides are three long, narrow, recessed lines in the stone, placed closely together, almost giving the appearance of gun slits. Additionally, the recessed lines that face east, toward the facade, in the pilasters on the northeast and southeast corners of the drill hall extend down almost the full length of the pilaster. These features all combine to create a fortress-like appearance for the armory.

The EAST facade of the armory consists of three bays: The centered entry bay consists of a parapet and massive deep pilasters that enframe the arched, recessed entry. At the base of the pilasters are short platforms, constructed of the same stone, but topped with concrete. The entry, with its original solid wood-panel double doors, is the main focus of the facade. Above the doors are pieces of cut stone, set vertically, which fill the space between the top of the recessed doors and the arched opening. Painted in yellow on these stones are the letters "W E T S U", with one letter on each stone. An original light fixture still hangs in the entry. The pilasters that enframe the entry have the three long, narrow recessed lines near the top as the other pilasters of the building. However, unlike the other pilasters, these also have a single, longer recessed line in the lower portion of the pilaster. Flanking the entry bay are two bays; each bay contains a pair of 15-light windows flanked on each side by a 10-light window. The windows have stone sills. Above the windows, evenly spaced and centered in the area between the windows and the roof line, are small, narrow recessed lines in the stone, giving the appearance of gun slits, which helps to reinforce the fortress-like appearance. There are wide shallow pilasters on the north and south corners of the east facade which project slightly above the roof line. On the pilaster on the northeast corner a cornerstone marks the construction as a 1936 WPA project and bears the inscription "State Armory/Built by Works Progress Administration/1936/W.S. Key/State Administrator".

The SOUTH elevation is divided into two sections, one being the administrative/garage section on the east, characterized by a flat roof and overhead doors, and the other being the drill hall section on the west, characterized by its barrel roof and window/door arrangement. The east half of the elevation is slightly set back from the west half. This, combined with the pilasters on the corners of the drill hall, provides a visual division of the elevation. The eastern section of the south elevation contains two metal overhead

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doors with a pair of 15-light windows to the west. At each end of the eastern section are original drain spouts. The western (drill hall) section contains an overhead door in the center, flanked by three large, 18-light windows on the west. To the east of the overhead door is an original pedestrian door topped with a 12-light transom, and two large, 18-light windows. There is an original light fixture above the overhead vehicle door.

Openings in the WEST elevation illuminate the drill hall. At the extreme north end is a 15-light window, and south of this, two pairs of 18-light windows are placed on each side of a off-centered pair of original wooden pedestrian doors that are topped with 12-light transoms. The doors open onto a small concrete landing with stairs on both the north and south sides. There is a wall, made of the same stone as the building, that provides support on the outside edge of the stairs. Located along the west elevation are two original drain spouts.

The NORTH elevation, like the south elevation, is divided into two sections, the drill hall section in the west and the administrative section in the east. The east half of the north elevation is recessed from the western half. The western (drill hall) section of the north elevation contains only one window close to the pilaster on the northeast corner of the drill hall. The eastern section of the elevation contains two 15-light windows and two original drain spouts. All of the windows on the north elevation have been covered with wood and painted white. Where the recessed eastern section of the elevation meets the western section, it creates a corner. In this corner is a square "platform", several feet high, which is an extension of the underground rifle range. It is constructed of the same stone as the rest of the building, but topped with concrete and what appears to be an air vent. Like the rest of the building, the corners of the western and eastern sections have shallow pilasters which buttress the corners and rise to become "towers."

Though the building's massing is strongly horizontal, several architectural details influenced by the Art Deco style give the building a vertical emphasis: the parapet and massive pilasters marking the main entry, corner pilasters, and narrow, vertical, steel-framed multiple-light windows in all elevations. Original metal downspouts are in place on the north, west, and south elevations.

There are two modern noncontributing buildings near the armory. A metal storage shed is located to the southeast of the armory on the other side of the yard area. It is side gabled with metal walls, a metal roof, and a single metal door on the east side. There are no windows and no eaves. Near the northwest

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corner of the armory, on the western elevation is an older metal shed. It is an end gabled building with metal walls, a metal roof, and a metal sliding door. The building is located within a few feet of the western wall of the armory, but it is not attached to the building. These buildings do not impact the integrity of the armory.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION:

The Okemah Armory exhibits a rectangular plan that was standard for WPA armories. The building is divided into two functional sections, a drill hall area on the west and an administrative/garage section on the east. The original floor plan has been maintained. In the administrative/garage section, rooms lie on either side of an east-west central hallway. A supply room and a large two-bay garage occupy the south half of the east section. On the north side of the hallway are more rooms. At the end of the hallway is the set of original double wooden doors that led to the drill hall, which is presently used as a city garage. The central hallway still has the concrete floor, which has been painted grey, and the walls have been panelled and a drop ceiling has been added. All of the interior doors in the armory are the original wooden doors and have been painted red. Many of the light fixtures are original as well.

The drill hall retains its original interior. The original stage, located on the north wall, has been partially enclosed with cinder block and is now used for storage. The stage is flanked on each side by original wooden doors. To the west of the stage are steps leading down to an original wood door that accesses the underground rifle range, which is currently used for storage as well. The original roof trusses are still in place and have the original hanging light fixtures. Insulation has been wired into place between the trusses, and hangs in a "scalloped" fashion. However, in several areas it is open enough to still see the roof. The area above the rafters is still open, resulting in the drill hall retaining its original feeling of openness. The original 1937 wood-block floor has been replaced with a concrete floor. On the west side is the pair of original wooden pedestrian doors that leads to the outside.

ALTERATIONS:

Alterations to the exterior have been almost non-existent. The original windows are still intact, but those on the north elevation have been covered with wood. The original wooden overhead doors have been replaced with metal overhead

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doors. Two noncontributing modern storage sheds have been built, one near the northwest corner of the armory, and one to the southeast of the building, but neither one is connected to the building. There is a chain-link fence that encircles the south and west sides, enclosing the yard area and visually tying the two noncontributing buildings to the armory.

The interior, as well, maintains a fairly high degree of integrity. The administrative/garage section has been minorly modified by the addition of a drop ceiling and paneling in the central hallway. The drill hall retains its original configuration, although the stage has been partially enclosed with cinder block, insulation has been wired into place on the ceiling and the wood-block floor has been replaced with a concrete floor.

Except for these minor changes, the Okemah Armory is essentially unaltered from its original appearance. It retains an extremely high degree of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship and conveys the feeling and association of its past environment.

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SUMMARY:

The Okemah Armory is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the economic context of Works Progress Administration projects in Okemah, Oklahoma, 1935 - 1937, and within the military context of national defense requirements of the Oklahoma National Guard's local unit in the era between the two world wars. It is also eligible under Criterion C for its architectural significance as an excellent example of WPA building style and methodology locally and in Oklahoma. The armory was constructed between 1935 and 1937 by local men who were qualified for work relief under WPA guidelines. The project brought \$45,000 into the economy of Okemah, Oklahoma, by employing an average of fifty out of work, skilled and unskilled workers for more than sixteen months. The armory also filled a military need for an adequate, secure drill hall and arms storage building for Company D, 180th Infantry, of the 45th Infantry Division of the Oklahoma National Guard. The Okemah Armory is significant architecturally as an excellent, intact example of WPA standardized style architecture. The materials and workmanship evident in the masonry, reflect both the goals of the WPA Building Program in Oklahoma and the practical considerations of using unskilled labor to construct large public buildings. As it retains a high degree of integrity, the Okemah Armory is able to convey the necessary feeling and association within these three areas of significance.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Oklahoma suffered severely during the initial years of the Great Depression, from 1929-1933. Oklahoma was a predominantly rural state, where in 1930, 65.7 percent of the population lived in rural areas, and twenty-seven of the state's seventy-seven counties had no "urban" areas or towns of more than 2,500 persons. Drought and general agricultural failure from 1932 through 1938, combined with a downturn in the petroleum industry, exacerbated the general economic depression. Rural communities, towns, and cities, which functioned as agricultural or petroleum service centers, consequently foundered.

Oklahoma's state and local governments, as was the case in other states as well, were unable to provide much help for citizens, whether urban or rural. Limited relief offered by counties did not alleviate the suffering, nor did meager annual appropriations by the state legislature. No public funding was available to maintain the existing infrastructure, and private charity failed to create or to support relief initiatives. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration, established in May of 1933 by the Roosevelt administration, provided some direct

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relief, in terms of food, clothing, and small stipends, but until the inception of the Works Progress Administration in 1935 only a few Oklahomans received adequate assistance. The urban employed and displaced farm families combined to create a situation in which 33 percent of all Oklahoma families were on the direct relief rolls by the time that Roosevelt created the WPA by executive order in May, 1935. By July 1935, there were 127,416 jobless men certified to work on WPA projects in Oklahoma.¹

The inauguration of the Works Progress Administration in 1935 stands as one of the benchmarks of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" for the United States. Administered nationally by Harry Hopkins, the program was designed to assist in lifting the nation from the depths of severe economic depression. Make-work projects provided work-relief for literally millions of individual citizens whose lives had been devastated by the near-collapse of the American economy. The infusion of cash into work-relief projects all over the state made a significant economic impact on hundreds of communities. During the seven-and-one-half-year life of the WPA, more than \$10.75 billion were expended, of which Oklahoma received more than \$185 million for projects ranging from school lunch programs, flood control, and archeological excavations, to major construction projects such as armories, highways, bridges, schools, stadiums, and museums.²

Chambers of Commerce and planning committees drew up specifications to meet three major criteria established by the administration: 1) projects must meet a well-defined community need; 2) each project must be sponsored by a public body, such as a city or county government or school district, which was required to provide from 10 to 25 percent of the project cost in cash and/or materials; and 3) 90 percent of those hired must be unemployed employable workers who were carried on the relief rolls. Compensation was to be based on 130 hours of work for \$21 (later \$23) per month for unskilled labor. In June of 1935 Oklahoma WPA Director General William S. Key estimated that there were already "70,000 employable unemployed" ready to work on his agency's projects throughout the state; by November of that year, 67,973 people were at work for the WPA, and by January of 1936, WPA rolls reached an all-time high of 94,281.³

The town of Okemah is the county seat of Okfuskee County, located in east central Oklahoma in what was the Creek Indian Nation. Okemah was officially opened for non-Native American settlement April 22, 1902. However, the townsite was selected around 1900 by Perry Rodkey and H.B. Dexter of Shawnee who were making a temporary survey of the railroad from Shawnee to Muskogee. They planned the townsite where they believed two proposed railroads would intersect. One, the

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Fort Smith and Western did build through town, but the other, the Frisco, was routed several miles south.⁴

In March, 1902, H.B. Dexter, Perry Rodkey and others sought out Indians eligible to receive allotments, for the purpose of filing upon the land to be occupied by the proposed town. The Okemah Townsite Company then leased the rights to the land, and town lots were sold at an auction on April 22, 1902. There were no titles to the property at the beginning as the Indian allottees could not legally sell their land, which was composed of 160 acres each. So to obtain title, a lease was taken for one year from the allottees by the Townsite Company. The company then sold town lots and gave quit claim deeds to the property. These were the only titles until 1903, when an Act of Congress gave the allottees permission to sell their allotments for townsite purposes. The citizens of the town, who paid for the property, selected a board of trustees to prorate the property and deed it to the person holding the quit claim deed after they paid the stipulated sum. The price designated by the Government to be paid was \$50 an acre. The town was then incorporated in 1904.⁵

Okemah was named for a Kickapoo Chief and means "something with a sharp point". When the town was founded, a fence which encircled the entire townsite was constructed to keep out meandering longhorns. After the town was established, tents were the only buildings for months, with lumber and building equipment brought in later from Fort Smith, Arkansas. Water had to be hauled into town, and was sold for 25 cents a barrel. The first train on the Fort Smith and Western Railroad reached Okemah on May 12, 1903. Prior to that time all goods and materials were carted overland from the Oklahoma towns of Weleetka, Okmulgee and Wetumka.⁶

The area around Okemah was primarily agricultural. Cotton was the chief crop, and cotton gins sprang up all over Okfuskee county. In the mid-1920s Okemah became a boom town. Located on the edge of the Cromwell oil field, the town grew to a population estimated at 7,000.⁷ The agricultural depression in the late 1920s, which was compounded by overproduction of petroleum and a consequent drastic drop in oil prices in the early 1930s, put hundreds out of work. The catastrophe affected Okemah and Okfuskee County as it did the rest of the state.

The federal government had instigated relief programs such as the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and the Public Works Administration (PWA), but the impact from these programs was limited. Creation of the Works Progress Administration in May 1935 brought a new attack on the problems of the Depression.

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The WPA was designed to combat record national levels of unemployment by setting up public works projects. WPA work gave men and women a dignified way to earn a meager living.

By the fall of 1935 Okfuskee County municipalities had submitted a number of proposed WPA projects. The county had submitted \$150,000 worth of projects, which included \$25,000 for Okemah. The City of Okemah hired an engineer, Aaron F. Levy of Oklahoma City, to prepare projects for submission. The city submitted several proposals including a cemetery project, lowering and straightening water mains, street and alley projects, a library project, park improvements, and the armory.⁸ By January of 1936, Okfuskee County had received \$237,702.96 for WPA projects. County projects covered a wide range, including library book repairs, school lunch programs, stone production for the armory, construction of an earth-fill dam for Okemah lake, community sanitation projects, road and culvert construction and repair, emergency flood repair projects, construction and improvements of schools, sewing rooms, and many more.⁹

Armory construction was the first major thrust of the WPA Building Program in Oklahoma. By mid-1937, 126 armories had been constructed throughout the United States, with 51 of these projects located in Oklahoma. When the WPA ended its program in 1943, 54 armories had been built and 53 others "reconstructed" in the state. The new construction infused \$3.5 million into local Oklahoma economies.¹⁰

Groundbreaking for the Okemah Armory took place in October of 1935, and construction proceeded through the rest of the year, through 1936, and into 1937. Due to labor shortages, material shortages, and weather-related shutdowns, a short project expanded into a long one. Finally finished in February, 1937, the armory was dedicated on March 2, 1937. On that day, Okemah celebrated with an open house, which 2,500 people attended, and a banquet. General Key, state WPA director, and other state and local dignitaries participated in the dedication, and the program concluded with a dance in the new armory.¹¹

WPA projects in 1935-1937 propped up the sagging economy of Okfuskee County. By January of 1936 alone, 1000 men in the county were employed and estimated WPA expenditures in Okfuskee County totalled more than \$237,702 on thirty projects ranging from road improvements to school buildings and sewing rooms. The majority of the expenditures went to labor alone. The WPA's cost on the armory project was \$45,000, with the city contributing the land. In human terms, thousands of man-hours of labor went into the armory's construction. In hard numbers, a monthly average of 50 men were employed on the project.¹² These figures testify to the

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labor-intensive nature of WPA projects, which were designed to provide as much work as possible for those on relief rolls. Most of the hours were consumed in hand labor--stone cutting, concrete-pouring, and installing the wood-block floor in the drill hall (pine blocks were cut, primed, set in asphalt, sanded, oiled, and polished, in sections). A concrete floor would have sufficed, but ample time and labor were available to create a more complex floor.¹³

Upon completion, the Okemah Armory became the home of Company D, 180th Infantry, of the 45th Infantry Division, Oklahoma National Guard. Reorganized under the National Defense Act of 1920, the Guard was an integral part of the United States military preparedness. Since 1920, approximately five-sixths of America's military strength lay with "citizen soldiers"--National Guard divisions and Reserve divisions in nine corps areas across the Nation. Each corps area had one Regular Army division, two National Guard divisions, and three Reserve divisions. Oklahoma, along with New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado, formed the 45th Infantry Division of the National Guard within the Eighth Corps. Despite inadequate training facilities, the Oklahoma National Guard provided service during various natural disasters and civil disturbances in the 1920s and 1930s. Because the Guard paid its members a monthly fee, which they spent locally to feed and clothe their families, Oklahoma communities actively competed to secure local Guard units during these years.¹⁴ Okemah had already been the home of the Guard unit for 10 years before the armory was built, and it was estimated that the company brought in approximately \$125,000 to Okfuskee County during that time.¹⁵

The National Guard received only one-tenth of the War Department's budget in the interwar years, and equipment was surplus from World War I. Many units needed permanent training, drilling, and storage facilities, as Guard members were required to meet 48 drills per year. Units without permanent armories usually rented space in warehouses that often lacked proper security. Four hundred new armories created by the cooperative effort of the federal and local governments helped correct this serious deficiency.¹⁶

The new Okemah Armory provided permanent housing for the local National Guard unit. The new facility was more than adequate for the detachment's needs. The building was divided into areas serving specific functions. The entire west section housed the drill hall, comprising the stage and the drill floor. The front, or east, section housed the arms vault, supply room, dressing room, classroom, offices, storage rooms, locker room, and garage. Underground, on the north side beneath the stage, was a rifle range. Thus the building provided for virtually every training need, except for field training exercises.

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Due in large measure to the WPA armory-building program, the 45th Infantry Division was able to achieve a level of military efficiency and readiness that prepared it to be among the first four National Guard divisions federalized in late 1940 by President Roosevelt. After the United States entered World War II, the 45th saw action in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy.¹⁷

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The Okemah Armory exemplifies WPA military architecture in Oklahoma. In the mid-1930s two armory plans were developed by Major Bryan W. Nolen, an Oklahoma City architect and National Guard officer selected in 1935 to serve on the staff of WPA administrator General William S. Key. Nolen's exterior design indicates the building's functions. He planned for every armory to have a drill hall section, usually having a high ceiling and either a barrel or a flat roof and also a flat-roofed, single-story extension (office, garage, and arms storage section) on one or both sides, the number depending on the number of guard units (one, two, or four) to be housed in the building. The design was flexible, allowing for changes in orientation of the building depending on street locations or size of the property. The WPA preferred to use locally purchased building materials, and therefore armories were constructed of native stone, usually quarried locally, or brick, manufactured within the state. Using locally quarried stone, which was labor-intensive, was a means of reaching the WPA goal of maximizing employment.

WPA architectural philosophy rejected ornate features, intricate designs, and elaborate trim; therefore, WPA armories tend to be straightforwardly utilitarian. They have a strong horizontal massing which is often relieved only by vertical Art Deco detailing or by virtue of being a provincial interpretation of a romantic high style, such as Tudor. The massive pilasters and parapets over the entrances and drill hall section are vertical Art Deco touches that lighten the otherwise fortress-like appearance of the Okemah Armory.

The overall appearance and detailing of the armory reflect the minimal funding for materials, as well as the use of unskilled and skilled labor. The WPA armories, as exemplified by the Okemah facility, may not be architectural masterpieces in the classical sense, but they served the WPA's purpose - to make work, and to provide secure space for national defense units. WPA armories exemplify the New Deal's practical determination to "do something - and to do something now." As David Baird notes in his survey of WPA resources of Oklahoma, WPA buildings are "the architecture of the poor," "mute reminders of the emotional distress and physical pain many Oklahomans suffered during the 1930s and of the

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enlightened relief effort by the Federal government that alleviated much of the suffering."¹⁸ In type, style, scale, materials, and workmanship, WPA armories, of which the Okemah Armory is an excellent example, are unique when compared to the rest of the built environment.

ENDNOTES

1. Dianna Everett, Clinton Armory National Register of Historic Places Nomination, and Marlow Armory National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, 1994.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Okemah Remembered - A Brief History of Okemah, Oklahoma, (no publication information provided), 1989.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Chickasha Express, February 17, 1957.
8. Okemah Daily Leader, October 2, October 21, 1935.
9. Okemah Daily Leader, January 13, 1936.
10. Everett, Marlow Armory National Register Nomination, 1994.
11. Okemah Daily Leader, February 28, March 3, 1937.
12. Okemah Daily Leader, February 13, 1936; February 28, 1937.
13. Jill Marsh, Duncan Armory National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, 1996.

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14. Everett, Marlow Armory National Register Nomination, 1994.
15. Okemah Daily Leader, February 28, 1937.
16. Everett, Marlow Armory National Register Nomination, 1994.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.

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Marsh, Jill. Duncan Armory National Register of Historic Places Nomination. Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office, 1996.

Okemah Daily Leader. August 1935 - March 1937.

Okemah Remembered - A Brief History of Okemah, Oklahoma. 1989 (No publication information is provided).

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Verbal Boundary Description:

The property consists of Lots 1 (one) through 12 (twelve), Block 13, Dill Addition of Okemah original plat, Okfuskee County.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary includes the area historically associated with the Okemah Armory.