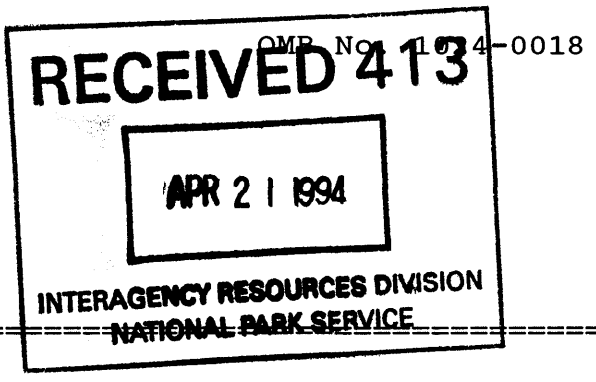


NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name Minco Armory

other names/site number Minco National Guard Armory

2. Location

street & number 407 West Pontotoc not for publication N/A
 city or town Minco vicinity N/A
 state Oklahoma code OK county Grady code 051
 zip code 73059

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Blake Wade February 22, 1994
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

- 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): _____

Edson H. Beall 5/20/94
Signature of Keeper Date
for 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>0</u> buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

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: DEFENSE Sub: arms storage

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Works Progress Administration

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

roof ASPHALT

walls BRICK

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)

ECONOMIC
MILITARY
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1936

Significant Dates 1936

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

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>595810</u>	<u>3908340</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

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 Dianna Everett, Research Associate

organization State Historic Preservation Office date February 15, 1993

street & number 621 N. Robinson, Suite 375 telephone 405/521-6249

city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73102

=====

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 State of Oklahoma/Oklahoma Military Department

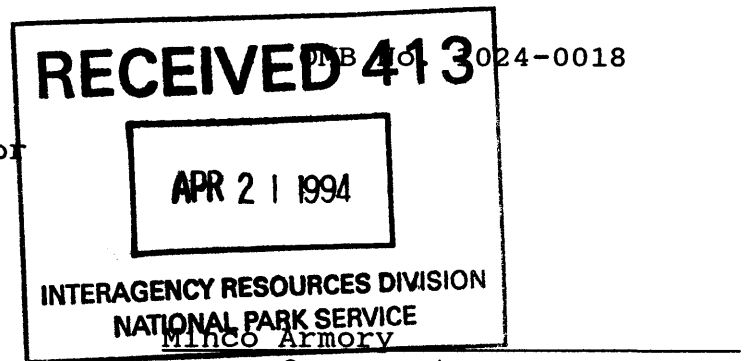
street & number 3501 Military Circle Northeast telephone 405-425-8000

city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73111
=====

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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name of property
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county and State

SUMMARY:

The Minco Armory (Minco National Guard Armory) is a self-contained, horizontal, two-story building constructed of red brick with black and dark grey limestone detailing. The building measures 140 feet (north to south) and 125 feet (east to west). A local project of the Works Progress Administration in Oklahoma, it was constructed in 1936. The armory property is located at 407 West Pontotoc Street. The surrounding area is residential. The armory's main entrance faces south. The floor plan of the Minco armory is typical of WPA-built armories, in that the building comprises two distinct sections: A north section, with barrel roof, contains the drill area, while a flat-roofed south section comprises offices, supply and arms rooms, on the second floor, and a garage area on the ground floor. The building exhibits decorative brickwork and stonework, exemplifying WPA architecture and construction philosophy in Oklahoma. Though the massing is strongly horizontal, several architectural details give the building a vertical emphasis and suggest an Art Deco influence: a stepped entrance bay; tall pilasters having stepped stone caps and vertical "incisions"; a vertical panel of horizontally laid ashlar blocks over each window in the south facade and a vertical panel of vertically laid brick over each in the east and west facades; and narrow, vertical steel-framed multiple-light windows in all facades (all original). Other decorative brickwork includes three-row rowlock-pattern segmental arches over each garage door on the south facade and the compound segmental arch forming the recessed entry. Exterior alterations include replacement of all exterior passenger and vehicle overhead doors with new steel doors in 1988 and the blocking up of one south vehicle door with brick and concrete blocks in 1988. Despite these changes, the Minco Armory retains appropriate integrity to enable it to exemplify WPA architecture in this small community. The armory is the only WPA-built building still standing in Minco.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION:

The Minco Armory (Minco National Guard Armory) is a self-contained, horizontal, two-story building constructed of red brick with limestone detailing. The building measures 140 feet (north to south) by 125 feet (east to west). A local project of the Works Progress Administration in Oklahoma, it was constructed in 1936 of red brick manufactured in McAlester, Oklahoma, at the state penitentiary. The armory property is located at 407 West Pontotoc Street, in a residential district. It is bordered by an alley and a city park on the north, by a lane on the west, by an alley and residence on the east, and by Pontotoc on the south.

As with many WPA armories in Oklahoma, the building is designed to have two principal facades that each give pedestrian and/or vehicular access to a

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street. The Minco Armory has two principal facades, one accessing Pontotoc Street (the main entry, on the south), and one accessing the alley on the east. These walls are characterized by outwardly projecting pilasters that enframe window/door bays. The main or south facade's main focus is an elaborate main entry bay, consisting of stepped and slightly castellated parapet and tall, shallow pilasters that enframe a compound segmental-arched portal. The east facade is divided by shallow pilasters into two parts, one being the two-story administrative section--characterized by tall, vertical metal-framed windows--and the drill hall section, characterized by stepped parapet and first-floor window/door arrangement. The secondary facades, on north and west, have almost no decoration, though the administrative/garage section (south end) of the west facade replicates the window arrangement of its counterpart on the east side.

As with most WPA-built armories, the roofline of the Minco Armory indicates that the building comprises two distinct sections: A north section, with barrel roof, comprises the drill area, while a flat-roofed south section comprises offices, supply and arms rooms, and garage. The north section consists in a two-story central block enframed by one-story wings. (Historically and presently) the drill hall roof is covered with roll roofing, while the administrative section's flat roof is a tar and gravel. The roofline of the Minco Armory gives the building a fortress-like aspect. In both sections the roofline is generally horizontal, though on the north (drill hall) section's east and west walls the parapet is stepped gradually upward toward the center, concealing the arc of the barrel vault. The roofline of both stories of the south section exhibits a castellated parapet with a stone coping. The embrasures (indentations) of the battlements occur over every window, with the merlons (raised portions) generally occurring over the pilasters, between window pairs, and over the center of unpierced bays. The south roofline gives the entire facade a stepped appearance: The east and west one-story wings enframe a central block, where two-story pilasters flank a stepped parapet that projects upward in the center.

Though the massing is strongly horizontal, several architectural details influenced by the Art Deco style give the building a vertical emphasis: the stepped parapet of the entrance bay; one- and two-story "compound" pilasters topped with stepped ashlar caps; vertical panels of horizontally laid ashlar blocks over the windows in the south facade; vertical panels of vertically laid brick over the windows in the east and west facades; and narrow, vertical steel-framed multiple-light windows in all facades. Original metal downspouts are in place on west and east facades.

One of the distinguishing architectural features of the Minco Armory is its decorative brickwork, exemplifying the best of WPA architecture and construction philosophy in Oklahoma. On the south and east facades, shallow pilasters enframe the bays. At the southeast and northeast corners of the north section, and at the southwest and southeast corners of the south section,

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these pilasters appear to be "compound" setback buttresses: That is, vertical "shafts" or "layers" of brick actually make up the corners of the buttresses, and these applications make the building's corners appear to be almost rounded. Each pilaster has one or more narrow vertical "incisions," or indentations, that almost give the appearance of being "gunports." Other decorative brickwork includes three-row rowlock-pattern segmental arches over each garage door on the south facade and in the compound-arched recessed entry. In addition, in the east and west facades of the south section, over each window opening, there is a narrow vertical panel of vertically laid brick extending from the window header to the top of the parapet. Three interior chimneys and one corner chimney, made of brick, rise from the roof of the south section.

Decorative stonework is also significant. Pilasters in all facades of the south section (both floors) have limestone caps and stepped-pattern decorative stone emblems in the center. The parapet coping on the east, west, and south facades consists in a double layer of rubbed ashlar blocks. Above each (second floor) window in the south facade is a vertical panel of horizontally laid ashlar blocks rising from the window header to the parapet. The south and east walls exhibit a rock-faced stone drip-mould at the base. Cast-concrete work is another feature, including all window sills and the parapet coping on the north wall.

Each facade exhibits regular openings that indicate the function of the interior space. All of the steel-framed windows are original. Glazing patterns include combinations of two or three lights set in four, five, or six rows (4/2/4/2, 3/6/3, 6/3/6/3, 3/6/3/3) usually with one or two sets of vertical center-pivot windows and a bottom row that opens in hopper fashion). The primary function of the ground floor is for vehicle storage, while the function of the second story is for administration. The SOUTH facade consists in seven bays (seven on ground level, three in second story). The two-story central bay contains the compound segmental-arched, recessed entrance that was boxed in in 1990 when original double wood doors were replaced with one single-light steel door. A three-step concrete porch leads to the doors. The entrance is flanked by pairs of steel overhead vehicle doors (original wood doors replaced in 1988) under brick arches. The second story in the central block is marked by three narrow multiple-light casement windows in the center over the entrance (illuminating the stairwell). These are flanked by pairs of 3/6/3 windows. In the second story, the east facade has three, and the west facade has four, regularly spaced 3/6/3 windows. On the ground floor, the EAST facade, divided into garage and drill hall sections, is marked by (south to north): a narrow 4/2/4/2 window between pilasters, an overhead steel vehicle door (new), a pair of 3/6/3 windows, and a single 3/6/3 window, all in the south (garage) section; and in the north (drill hall) section, a 3/6/3 transom over a (new) steel pedestrian door, three 6/3/6/3 windows, a (new) steel overhead vehicle door, three 6/3/6/3 windows, and a 3/6/3 transom over a permanently blocked pedestrian door. The NORTH facade (drill hall) has, east to west, a pair of

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6/3/6/3 windows, a (new) steel overhead vehicle door, a single 6/3/6/3 window, a pair of 3/6/3 transoms over pedestrian doors (one has been permanently closed with a steel panel), two pairs of 6/3/6/3 windows, and, illuminating a dressing room adjacent to the stage, a small three-light hopper-opening window beside a 3/6/3/3 window. On the WEST, the south (administrative) section has (south to north) a 4/2/4/2 window, a pair of 3/6/3 windows; and a triplet of 3/6/3 windows; the north, or drill hall, section has a single 3/6/3/3 window and a ground-level, two-foot-square vent window (opening into the underground rifle range). A few lights have been painted to block sunlight.

A WPA cornerstone, in the southeast corner of the south facade, identifies the building and contains the inscription: "State Armory/Built by Works Progress Administration/1936/W. S. Key/State Administrator."

A communications antenna rises from the parapet above the main entrance. A new steel flagpole and a wooden sign identifying the building as a National Guard facility sit at streetside outside the main entrance. A chain-link fence is attached to the southwest and southeast corners and encloses the side yards, providing security for vehicles and for a single gasoline pump.

EXTERIOR ALTERATIONS:

In 1988, because of severe deterioration that occasioned security risks, all exterior original wood overhead panel-type vehicle doors and panel-type pedestrian doors were replaced with new steel doors. Two pedestrian openings were permanently blocked with steel panels. In the south facade, one garage door opening was bricked up in order to turn interior space into an office.¹ The brick was laid flush with the original wall and in the same pattern, and it is approximately the same color as the original. The rowlock-pattern arch over the original opening remained intact. These changes do not impede the building's ability to convey its significance and past historical associations. There are no other exterior alterations.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION/ALTERATIONS:

The Minco 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 north, and a two-story administrative/garage section on the south. The first-floor garage extends the width of the building, while the second-floor office area extends only over the central block of the garage area.

The 86' by 125' north section, or drill hall, was and is characterized by a very high vaulted ceiling with exposed sheet metal roofing panels and steel truss system. The elevated stage, in the west end, has been closed off by a concrete-block wall, but on either side, the dressing rooms are intact; under the stage, the now-condemned underground rifle range is still accessible. Doors

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to backstage dressing rooms and rifle range are original wood panel type. The interior wall between the drill room and the garage section is brick (load-bearing), and the original set of pedestrian doors is still in place; the original wood panel-type overhead interior vehicle doors also remains. The original wood-block floor in the drill room was removed in 1968, leaving a three-inch-high, two-foot-wide lip around the margin of the room. In the south, or garage section, ground floor, all interior walls are brick. The original floor plan remains, though in 1988-1991 rooms under the stairs and in the east garage were enlarged into latrines and an office by adding wood-framed walls. In the east garage, the kitchen room (now storage), small storerooms, and an elevator shaft remain as original. The original concrete ceiling is visible in this area.²

On the second floor, all interior walls are also brick. Original brick walls still divide the area into five spaces off a central hallway. On the east side a large supply room has an elevator shaft and a large fireproof vault (for arms storage), and another room, divided originally into two spaces, provided an orderly room and commander's office (complete with closet, private bath/shower, and corner fireplace of rock-faced stone). On the west, an original shower/latrine room (now storage) is flanked by a large classroom and a large office. All original upstairs walls remain, though drop ceilings have been added in most rooms, and false walls created a new room in one corner of the supply room in 1968.³

The Minco Armory is essentially intact, retaining adequate integrity of location, setting, exterior design, materials, and workmanship to convey its significance as the embodiment of WPA-type military architecture in Oklahoma.

ENDNOTES

1. Sgt. Jimmy Mitchell, Co. E, 2/180th Infantry, interview by Dianna Everett, Minco, Oklahoma, January 28, 1993.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

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SUMMARY:

The Minco Armory (Minco National Guard Armory) is significant within the economic context of 1936 Works Progress Administration projects in Minco, Oklahoma, within the military context of national defense requirements of the Oklahoma National Guard's local unit in the era between the two world wars, and within the architectural context of WPA building style and methodology locally and in Oklahoma. The armory was constructed in 1936 by local men who were qualified for work relief under WPA guidelines. The project brought \$51,307 into the economy of Minco, Oklahoma, by employing an average of 50 previously unemployed, unskilled workers. The armory also filled a longstanding military need for an adequate, secure drill hall and arms storage building for the Headquarters Battery and Combat Train, 189th Field Artillery, 45th Infantry Division of the Oklahoma National Guard, which had previously had no permanent armory. The Minco Armory is significant architecturally as an excellent, intact example of WPA architecture. The exterior materials, Oklahoma-made brick, and craftsmanship evident in the masonry, reflect both the goals of the WPA Building Program in Oklahoma and the potential for overcoming the problems of using unskilled labor to construct large public buildings. As it is essentially intact, the Minco Armory is able to convey appropriate feeling and association within these three contexts. In addition, the armory is the only WPA building still extant in Minco, Oklahoma.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

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

Oklahoma's state and local governments 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 1934 by the Roosevelt administration, provided some direct 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 unemployed 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

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order in May 1935. By July 1935 there were 127,416 jobless men certified 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. Nationally administered by Harry Hopkins, the program was designed to assist in lifting the nation from the depths of severe economic depression. Make-work projects provided 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 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, stadia, and museums.²

Localities competed for WPA funds from the outset. 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.³ In June of 1935 Oklahoma WPA Director (Gen.) 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 94,281.⁴

Armory construction was the first major thrust of the WPA Building Program in Oklahoma. Beginning in late 1935 and continuing into mid-1937, 126 armories had been constructed throughout the United States, and 51 of these projects were located in Oklahoma. When the WPA ended its activities in 1943, 54 armories had been built and 53 others "reconstructed" in the state. The new construction had infused \$3.5 million into local economies.⁵

Grady County, in west-central Oklahoma was originally part of the Chickasaw Nation. The small community of Minco, on the extreme western side of the nation, was established in 1890 as the (temporary) terminus of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad in Indian Territory. The community served as a shipping point. In the 1899-1906 period, when the Chickasaw lands were allotted and opened for settlement, the town grew and began serving as a minor agricultural service center and cattle- and wheat-shipping point. The community was large enough to host a small higher education institution, El Meta Bond College, with buildings constructed in Block 8 of the original town.

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By 1930 Minco boasted a population of approximately 900. With the onset of an agricultural depression in the 1920s, followed by the Great Depression in the early 1930s, local economic activity in Minco swiftly declined. By September of 1934, 1,279 families, comprising 11.2 percent of the county population, were on direct relief.⁶

With the inauguration of the WPA in late spring of 1935, Minco citizens began pressing the Town Board to prepare several proposals for WPA projects, including street paving, sidewalks/curbing, a swimming pool/bathhouse, and tennis courts. The board finally submitted these requests and also proposed the construction of an armory building, which was projected to cost \$44,000. An armory site on West Pontotoc Street, where El Meta Bond College had stood, was selected by a citizens' committee.⁷ Mrs. Meta Chestnutt Sager, founder of the college, sold the property to the city for one dollar for the use of the National Guard. The city deeded the property to the state, thus providing the sponsor's share of the project in land.⁸

By July of 1935, 1,331 Grady County clients had been certified to the WPA's district office. By September, WPA work relief helped to reduce slightly the number of families on relief to 1,213, or 11 percent of the county population. More assistance was needed desperately, two shifts of fifty men each went to work on the armory in January of 1936. A larger than usual number of personnel were employed on the Minco armory, in order to speed the project and provide desperately needed jobs. Across Grady County, by September of 1936, 980 persons were at work on WPA projects.⁹

WPA crews began clearing the armory site in the first week of January, 1936. At various times the project employed between sixty and two hundred men working staggered shifts (two six-hour shifts per day), in order to provide maximum employment and to finish the job in an expeditious manner. A short project expanded into a long one, but the armory was completed in December of 1936.¹⁰ On December 15, 1936, the day of dedication, thirty-five hundred Mincoites celebrated the opening of the armory, with Gen. Key, state WPA director, and many other dignitaries present to participate in the laying of the cornerstone. The guests enjoyed an afternoon program including a military band concert, parade, banquet, and evening festivities including a "floor show" and a dance in the new armory.¹¹

WPA projects in 1935-1937 propped up the sagging rural economy of Grady County. The WPA's cost on the armory project was \$45,000 (with the city contributing only the site). The federal government invested more in the armory than in any other building project in the town.¹² In human terms, tens of thousands of person-hours of labor went into the armory's construction. Most significantly, as many as two hundred men were employed on the project at one time. These figures testify to the labor-intensive nature of WPA projects, which were designed to provide as much work as possible for those on relief

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rolls. Most of the hours were consumed in hand labor (bricklaying and pouring concrete), and in installing a wood-block floor in the 86' by 125' drill room (more than 100,000 wood blocks were cut, primed, set in asphalt, sanded, oiled, and polished in patterned sections). A concrete floor would have sufficed, but ample time and labor were available to create a complicated design.¹³

Upon completion, the Minco Armory became the home of the Service Battery (less Band and Staff Section), 189th Field Artillery, 45th Infantry Division, Oklahoma National Guard.¹⁴ Reorganized under the National Defense Act of 1920, the Guard was an integral part of United States military preparedness. Since 1920, approximately five-sixths of America's military strength had consisted of "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 Army Reserve divisions. Oklahoma, along with New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado, formed one division of National Guard within the Eighth Corps. Despite inadequate training facilities, the Oklahoma National Guard provided service during numerous natural disasters and civil disturbances during the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁵ Because the Guard paid its members a monthly fee, which they spent locally to support their families, Oklahoma communities actively competed to secure local Guard units during these years. In August of 1921, Minco had been selected as home of a Service Battery of the 189th Field Artillery. By 1936 the unit included five officers and forty-six non-commissioned officers and enlisted men.¹⁶

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 facilities 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.¹⁷ The Minco National Guard unit had previously kept its equipment in an abandoned garage.¹⁸

The new Minco Armory provided permanent housing for the unit. The new facility was more than adequate for the detachment's needs. The building was divided into areas serving specific functions. On the ground floor, the entire south section housed the drill hall, comprising the stage and the drill floor. Underground, beneath the stage, was a rifle range. The north half of the building comprised two stories. The ground floor included a garage, armory, machine shop, tool room, supply room, and caretaker's office. Space on the second floor provided offices and quarters for officers and men, including locker rooms and a club room. Thus the building provided for virtually every training need, except for field training exercises.

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

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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.¹⁹

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The Minco Armory typifies WPA armory architecture in Oklahoma. In the mid-1930s several standard 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 Gen. William S. Key. Nolen 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 on one or both sides, the number depending on the number of units (one, two, or four) to be housed in the building.²⁰ Design was flexible, allowing for the orientation of the building to various avenues of egress and to size of property and size of Guard unit. In the case of the Minco Armory, the plan provided for a second story in the armory section, rather than an extension on the other side. The WPA preferred to use locally purchased building materials, and therefore armories were constructed of native stone, usually quarried locally, or brick, manufactured locally or within the state. The Minco Armory used brick manufactured at the state penitentiary at McAlester.²¹

WPA architectural philosophy prohibited the use of ornate features, intricate structure, and elaborate trim; therefore, WPA armories tend to be straightforwardly utilitarian. They have a strong horizontal massing, a fortresslike quality, 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.²² Reminiscent of Medieval English style, the stepped parapet over the entrance, the slightly castellated parapet around the three walls of the administrative/garage section, and the layered pilasters/buttressed corners give the Minco Armory an overtly military appearance, while the cast concrete caps on the parapet and on the buttresses show an Art Deco influence. While WPA military architecture usually reflects minimal funding for design and materials, as well as the use of unskilled labor as bricklayers, stonecutters, and so forth, the Minco Armory reflects the best of the masons' craftsmanship. As David Baird notes in his survey of WPA structures 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 enlightened relief effort by the federal government that alleviated much of the suffering."²³ Although WPA buildings may not be architectural masterpieces, 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 do something now." In addition, the significance of the Minco National Guard Armory is enhanced by the fact that it is the only WPA building still extant in this small central

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Oklahoma town. In type, style, scale, materials, and workmanship, WPA armories, of which the Minco Armory is an excellent example, are unique when compared to the rest of the built environment, both in Minco and across the state.

ENDNOTES

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2. Baird, "Final Report," 10; "Final Report of the Oklahoma Work Projects Administration, February 27, 1943," Archives of the Work Projects Administration and Predecessors, 1933-1943, Series One: The Final State Reports, 1943 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 1987), 1; "Building Construction Report, February, 1943," *ibid.*, 5-6; Daily Oklahoman, March 12, 1936; Baird, "Final Report," 10.
3. "Questions and Answers on the WPA [brochure]," (Washington, D.C.: Work Projects Administration, December 1, 1939), Vertical File, Oklahoma Historical Society; Baird, "Final Report," 11; Kingfisher (Oklahoma) Times, July 9, 1936.
4. Guthrie (Oklahoma) Daily Leader, June 23, 1935; *ibid.*, November 13, 1935; Daily Oklahoman, September 12, 1936.
5. "Accomplishments: Works Progress Administration for Oklahoma, July 1, 1935-March 1, 1937," (Oklahoma City: Works Progress Administration, 1936), 38; "Building Construction Report," 5-6.
6. Irvin Munn, "Minco," Chickasha: A Journey Back in Time (Chickasha: University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma Foundation, c. 1979), 16-17; Daily Oklahoman, September 29, 1935.
7. Minco Minstrel, June 27, 1935; *ibid.*, August 29, 1935.
8. Deed Records, County Clerk's Office, Chickasha, Grady County, Oklahoma, 366: 318; Munn, "Minco," 17.
9. Daily Oklahoman, September 29, 1937; Minco Minstrel, July 11, 1935; *ibid.*, January 2, 1936; Daily Oklahoman, September 12, 1937.
10. Minco Minstrel, January 2, 1936; *ibid.*, June 25, 1936; *ibid.*, December 3, 1936; WPA Project No. 240, "Index to Reference Cards for Work Projects

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Administration Files, 1935-1942," (Washington, D.C.: WPA, c. 1942), Micro T-935, reel 54.

11. Minco Minstrel, December 10, 1936; *ibid.*, December 17, 1936;.
12. *Ibid.*, July 18, 1935; *ibid.*, May 7, 1936; *ibid.*, January 28, 1937.
13. *Ibid.*, January 2, 1936; *ibid.*, January 28, 1937.
14. "Accomplishments," 44.
15. Guy Nelson, Thunderbirds: A History of the 45th Infantry Division (Oklahoma City: 45th Infantry Division Association, 1970), 6-9; Kenny Franks, Citizen Soldiers: Oklahoma's National Guard (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 38, 40, 49.
16. Historical Annual: National Guard of the State of Oklahoma, 1938 (Baton Rouge, La.: Army and Navy Publishing Company, 1938), 235; Minco Minstrel, August 6, 1936.
17. Nelson, Thunderbirds, 6-9; Franks, Citizen Soldiers, 38, 40.
18. "Accomplishments," p. 42.
19. Nelson, Thunderbirds, 12.
20. "Accomplishments," 38, 40; Historical Annual, 18.
21. Baird, "Final Report," 15.
22. Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-43 (Washington, D.C.: G. P. O., c. 1943), 52; Baird, "Final Report," 15, 21, 23.
23. *Ibid.*, 17; *ibid.*, 2.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

Beginning at the intersection of North Fourth Street and West Pontotoc Street, directly in front of the armory's main entrance, proceed east along the north curblineline of Pontotoc Street for 100 feet; turning north, proceed north for 170 feet; turning east, proceed west for 200 feet; turning south, proceed south for 170 feet; turning east, proceed along the curblineline of West Pontotoc Street for 100 feet, having described a closed polygon measuring 200 feet east to west by 170 feet north to south.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

This property represents the south 1/2 (one half) of Block 5 of Block 8, College Subdivision of Block numbered 8 (eight), of the Original Town of Minco, Grady County, Oklahoma. All of "Block 5 of Block 8" is the legal description of the armory property, as recorded in Book 366, page 318, Deed Records, Grady County, Oklahoma. The half that is excluded from the verbal boundary description is a city park and is not used for National Guard activities.