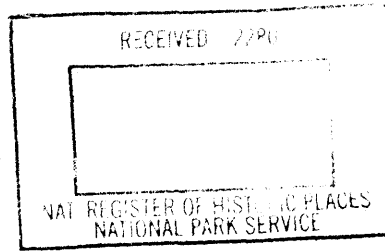


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 1.1 mi N, .35 mi E of Jct. SH 18 and US Hwy. 64

city or town Pawnee not for publication N/A  
state Oklahoma code OK county Pawnee vicinity X  
zip code 74058 code 117

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] \_\_\_\_\_ Date 2-21-03

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is

- 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

[Signature]

SEP 2 2003

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature] \_\_\_\_\_ Date 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>  1  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	structures
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u>	objects
<u>  2  </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

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: sports facility

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: VACANT/NOT IN USE Sub: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: WPA Standardized Style

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

roof WOOD

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)

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION  
ECONOMICS  
ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1933-1953  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Significant Dates 1937  
1939  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Cultural Affiliation N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Acreage of Property Nine Acres MOL

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	14	696920	4025450	3	_____	_____
2	<u>N/A</u>	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

N/A See continuation sheet.

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

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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

name/title Cynthia Savage, Architectural Historian, for the City of Pawnee  
organization Savage Consulting date March 2003  
street & number 364 County Road 1230 telephone 405/459-6200  
city or town Pocasset state OK zip code 73079

=====  
Additional Documentation  
=====

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage  
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

=====  
Property Owner  
=====

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

name City of Pawnee  
street & number 510 Illinois Street telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Pawnee state OK zip code 74058



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 9 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

SUMMARY

The Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse, located adjacent to Pawnee Lake about a mile north of Pawnee, Pawnee County, Oklahoma, was erected by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930s. The swimming pool, measuring 600 feet by 250 feet with a stone retaining wall, was begun in late 1934 by the FERA and completed under the WPA in 1937. The stone bathhouse, started the following year, was completed in 1939 by the WPA. In addition, there is also an historic stone railing in front of the bathhouse; an elaborate stone stairway with multiple landings from the bathhouse to the east; an historic stone retaining wall at the mid-level between the pool and bathhouse; several historic sets of concrete stairs with stone sidewalls connecting the pool and bathhouse; another historic stone retaining wall with a sidewalk on the west side of the pool; and two nonhistoric wooden piers extending into the swimming pool. Constructed as integral parts of the swimming pool and bathhouse, these elements are relatively minor in scale, physically connected and/or historically associated with the primary resources. Thus, they do not warrant inclusion as separate countable resources.

The three acre swimming pool is ringed by a stone retaining wall on the east, south and west. On the north side, there is not retaining wall but historically a beach area which gradually slopes into the water. The stone retaining wall around three sides of the pool has degraded in places but maintains much of its historic form. Replaced by a modern, concrete, in-ground swimming pool inside the city limits in about 1980, the pool has not been used for public swimming for many years. The city has recently reopened the pool and bathhouse to the public. The pool bottom is natural, muck and sand, and at the time the resource was photographed in January 2003, almost fully visible. It has been refilled with water. On the north and west sides, there are two wood piers which extend from the shoreline out into the pool. Recently refilled, despite the piers the pool retains a remarkable degree of integrity in terms of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

Located on the tall hill to the northwest of the pool, the bathhouse is a two-story, rectangular, stone building with a hipped roof. The wood shake shingle roof was re-shingled within the past year. The stone entry porch has a wood-covered front-gabled roof, native stone walls with multiple arched openings and a concrete floor. The small windows on the top floor are all located high on the wall and filled with wood louvers. The arched openings on the east side of the lower floor are generally unfilled. Not having any exterior doors, the interior doors are wood slab. A metal awning has been added to provide shade for the upper terrace. It is attached to the building,

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 10 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

but is a reversable addition that does not detract from the bathhouse's appearance. Extending down the hill to the swimming pool is an elaborate stairway with three landings and highly artistic stone side and retaining walls. Used only sporadically since the closing of the swimming pool in about 1980, the bathhouse retains a high degree of integrity with the only modifications being a new wood shingle roof which matches the historic roof and recently repaired damage to some of the stonework caused by vandals. Overall, the bathhouse maintains its historic location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling and association.

The pool is located immediately south of the dam of Pawnee Lake which was constructed in 1932/1933, also at least partly under the auspices of the FERA. The historic 300-acre Pawnee Lake, with 150 campsites, a nine-hole golf course, several shooting ranges and an airstrip scattered around it, continues to be an important recreational site within the county. To the direct east of the pool are several different ponds forming the fish hatchery which dates back to the lake's construction. The bathhouse sits by itself on the hill west of the pool in an open area southwest of the dam with a large gravel parking area south of the black topped dam road which turns to the northwest just past the bathhouse, leading to camping sites and other amenities on the west side of the lake. To the immediate west and south of the pool and bathhouse remains a rocky wooded area.

DESCRIPTION OF SWIMMING POOL

The pool is a large, rectangular, man-made lake with stone retaining walls and a dirt floor. There is no retaining wall on the north side of the pool. The pool is very gradually sloped on this side to allow easy access to the water. Historically, there was a sandy "beach" area along this side of the pool which the city of Pawnee plans on restoring. New sand has been added to the beach nad to the bottom of the swimming area. Roughly in the middle of the north side a nonhistoric wood pier was constructed within the last several years. It is now used as a lifeguard stand. The long pier extends from the dirt road at the base of the dam over the beach area out into the pool. At the south end of the pier is a sizeable square observation deck. The pier has wood railings which extend the length of the structure and along the observation deck.

The east and south sides of the pool are more steeply banked. Although the fairly steep, sloped, stone retaining walls remain visible for the most part, heavy brush has grown over much of the walls. Above the south and east banks of the pool, there is a wide pea gravel and dirt walk which separates the pool on the east from the multiple small fish ponds of the historic hatchery and a wooded area on the south.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 11 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

The retaining wall along the west side is the most visible. Unlike the retaining walls on the east and south sides, the west wall is not sloped. Rather, the short wall provides a clear demarcation of that side of the pool. Towards the north side, metal poles remain upright on the pool retaining wall which when connected by some type of chain would have provided a physical and visual barrier to the pool. In the middle of the west pool wall, another nonhistoric wood pier has been constructed. Matching the north side pier, the west pier has wood railings all around it. Shorter than the north pier, the west pier extends directly from the west retaining wall into the pool with a larger observation deck. Immediately above the retaining wall is a wide path which extends fully along that side of the pool. Another short, stepped, stone retaining wall marks the west side of the cleared path with trees and rocks abounding on the other side. About mid-way along the path, there is a half-circular area outlined by the stepped stone wall. To the north of this along the wall, there is a set of stairs with capped stone sidewalls which now leads to a wooded, rocky slope.

On the northwest corner of the swimming pool, there are three sets of concrete stairs with stone sidewalls which connect the pool to the bathhouse stairs. Leading from the beach area to a central landing and connected to the west retaining wall of the pool, there is a set of stairs with stepped stone sidewalls. To the southwest of this, connecting the west side walk to the central landing, is another set of stairs, also with stepped stone sidewalls on the east side. The west side of the stairs is stepped only once and connects to the retaining wall west of the walk. The central landing is defined on the southwest side by a continuation of the curved retaining wall of the walk. The other sides of the landing are undefined with a dirt path off to the north leading to the dirt road at the base of the dam. Slightly north of the beach stairs above the landing is the third sets of stairs. These concrete stairs have stepped stone sidewalls which flair out before extending into a mid-level, stepped, stone retaining wall on either side. Connecting this set of stairs to the stairs at the base of the bathhouse is a slightly curved, flagstone walk with raised edges.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION OF THE BATHHOUSE

The east side of the Pawnee Municipal Bathhouse is the most spectacular. Featuring an elaborate stairway with multiple landings, the east elevation reveals a stepped two-story building constructed of stone and built into the hill with only the upper floor of the building rising above. Due to the unusual site, the north and south elevations are not readily visible. The west elevation of the bathhouse, fronting onto the parking lot, is the plainest and is standard of WPA-built buildings in Oklahoma. All of the major

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 12 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

architectural details of the bathhouse are native stone with the exception of the hipped roof which was clad in the past year with new, wood shake shingles. Notably, the foundation and stairway stone does not have the extremely smooth finish of the main walls. Laid in a broken rangework, the ashlar masonry of the main walls are decoratively contrasted with rusticated decorative details. The magnificent stairway is similar to the upper walls, being ashlar masonry laid in a broken rangework, except the stone is not as smoothly finished. The stone foundation is a combination of rusticated ashlar and uncut coursed rubble.

To the west of the bathhouse is an historic stone retaining wall which separates the building from the parking lot. The stone retaining wall to the front of the bathhouse is slightly curved on the south side and straight on the north. Both ends of the wall are punctuated by taller, capped, stone piers. On the far north end is a small separate section of stone retaining wall which is likely not original as it is not capped. In the middle of the retaining wall is a short set of concrete stairs which allow access to the bathhouse. Unlike the majority of stairs on both the bathhouse and pool, the stone sidewalls of the entry stairs are not stepped. A wide concrete walk extends from the stairs to the building.

The west elevation of the bathhouse is only one-story. The symmetrical west elevation features a central, wood, gabled, entry porch with multiple, round, arched openings. The entry porch has slightly projected, rusticated, stone quoins, voussoirs and keystones which contrast with the smooth finished stone of the remainder of the porch and walls. Located above the large, central, round arch is a smooth dressed stone inscribed with the date of completion of the building, 1939. On both the north and south side of the entry porch are narrower, round, arched openings which match in exact detail the larger center arch. A concrete sidewalk extends from the side openings to the end of the building, terminating abruptly in the grass. Like the entry porch, the west wall has rough dressed stone quoins marking the corners. The stone sills of the small, high, louver-filled windows are also rough dressed to provide a contrast to the smooth finish of the majority of the wall.

The north and south elevations are matching with both levels of the bathhouse visible. Like the west elevation, there are three small windows located high on each wall of the upper floors of these elevations. Each window is filled with wood louvers. Towards the bottom of each wall of the upper floor of both elevations, the stone becomes rougher. The lower story of the building begins at the same level as the rougher stone with a stone railing enclosing the resulting balcony area off the back of the top floor and on top of the lower floor. Part of the railing had been knocked off by vandals; the city replaced the missing pieces. The only openings on the south elevation of the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 13 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

lower floor is a single, wood, slab door, situated towards the east side of the elevation. In addition to a doorway which is located towards the west, the north elevation has three narrow openings towards the east. The doors on each elevation open onto narrow walkways. The north walkway begins at the door and is level. The south walkway is stepped towards the west side and appears to have extended farther west; however, overgrowth and fallen stones obscure the westernmost part of the walk. Like the upper balcony, the walkways have stone railings, parts of which have been vandalized and recently repaired. The walkway extends around to the east elevation, creating a small balcony area on this level of the building.

The east elevation of the top floor has eight of the small windows located high on the wall, filled with wood louvers and separated by two round arched openings which allow access to the upper level balcony. The balcony now is covered with a metal awning, attached to the eave of the roof and supported by steel poles. Below this, the east wall of the lower story of the bathhouse has a large, central, round arched opening. On either side of the opening are two round arched windows. The north window has been filled with wire, the south window is open. The stone voussoirs and keystones of both the windows and entryway are rusticated, as are the window sills. As mentioned above, the north and south walkways at this level wraparound the east elevation, creating a small balcony area. Corresponding to the large arched opening and descending from this small balcony area is a long, straight, central set of stairs with stone, capped, stepped sidewalls. Consisting of twenty-eight steps, these stairs are by far the longest on the bathhouse and pool. The stairs end in a small, rectangular, concrete landing with a landscaped area to the immediate west. The landscaped area is edged with matching, curved, stone railing to create a half-circular area supported by tall, curved, stone walls below. The concrete landing at the base of the long stairs connects to the north with a dramatic set of curved stairs which wraparound the north side of the tall curved walls. These nineteen concrete stairs also have capped, stone, stepped sidewalls which end at another curvilinear landing. Smaller than the landing above, the bottom bathhouse landing is concrete resting on short, curved, stone walls. Centrally located so as to link visually with the long upper stairs and lower pool stairs, this final section of stairs is a mere seven steps up from the flagstone walk connecting the pool and bathhouse. Like the other section of stairs on the bathhouse, these stairs have capped, stepped, stone sidewalls.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION OF THE BATHHOUSE

Upon entering the top floor, there is a large entryway with a concrete floor and wood ceiling. In the middle of the entryway is a set of concrete stairs which descend to the lower floor. Outlining the rectangular opening of the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 14 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

stairs is a metal railing. On either side of the stairs on the east wall are round arched doorways which lead to the upper level balcony. None of these doorways, including the main entry, have doors. Flush with the outer wall of each arched opening are stone walls which divide the remainder of the interior into two large rooms on either side of the entryway. These rooms, dressing/showers rooms, are closed off by heavy wooden doors.

The lower story of the building is divided similar to the upper floor. The north room of the lower floor is completely divided from the central walkway. The south room has a half wall on the north side. This room probably originally functioned as the check room for swimmers to store their valuables while swimming. Although the rough stone walls inside these rooms are currently exposed, they were likely covered historically. The ceiling is painted wood and the floor is concrete.

ALTERATIONS

The Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse retain an extraordinary degree of integrity, particularly as the property has not fully functioned in over twenty years. Changes to the swimming pool are minimal and consist primarily of construction of the two wooden piers. The bathhouse has been altered by the replacement of the roof; however, as the historic materials were duplicated this modification has no tangible impact on the building's integrity; and an awning has been added to shade the upper terrace. Other changes to the bathhouse are related to its disuse and damage caused by vandals, primarily the knocking off of sections of the stone railings. These have been repaired either with the missing pieces or by similar materials. Due to its scale and location, the bridge does not significantly impact

As the city has worked to return the pool and bathhouse to full use and are sensitive to the historic value of the property, the work done on the pool and bathhouse has reclaimed the full glory of their early days. Overall, the pool and bathhouse retain a high degree of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 15 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

SUMMARY

The Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for their role in local recreation from construction of the pool in 1937 until 1953, the current National Register fifty year mark. The pool and bathhouse provided residents with popular, easily accessed, recreation facilities that were available at a minimal charge. Additionally, the resources are significant for their association with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs, specifically the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and Works Progress Administration (WPA). These programs not only bolstered the local, state and national economies through much of the Great Depression of the Thirties but also contributed a lasting legacy to Oklahoma's built environment. Further, under Criterion C, the pool and bathhouse are architecturally significant as excellent examples of the WPA Standardized Style as applied to swimming pools and bathhouses. Within the Pawnee community, the resources are clearly unique.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The town of Pawnee came into existence in 1893 following the opening of the Cherokee Outlet on 16 September. Named the temporary county seat of Q County, the town, first called Townsite Number 13, quickly thrived. Aiding the development of the town was the nearby Pawnee Agency. Established in 1875, the Pawnee Agency boasted numerous buildings by 1893, including dormitories, shops, warehouses, barns and outbuildings related to the Indian Training School run by the Agency and sponsored by the Southern Baptist Church. The first post office was established on 4 May 1876 under the name Pawnee Agency. This name was changed on 26 October 1893 to simply Pawnee.<sup>1</sup>

A town election in November 1893 formally changed the name of the town from Townsite Number 13 to Pawnee. That same year, residents of Pawnee also petitioned that the town be named the permanent county seat of Pawnee County, which had been renamed from Q County following the organization of county government under the laws of Oklahoma Territory. Successful in their bid, the town remained the county seat even after additional land was added to the county boundaries following the allotment of the Otoe Reservation in 1904 and unsuccessful attempts to divide the county by representatives at the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention in 1906. Since statehood in 1907, the county has retained its 1904 boundaries, although unsuccessful efforts were made to annex

---

<sup>1</sup>Kenny A. Franks and Paul F. Lambert, Pawnee Pride (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: Oklahoma Heritage Association, 1994), 114-115.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 16 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

some land in Creek County in 1916.<sup>2</sup>

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Like most of Oklahoma, Pawnee depended on agriculture and oil for much of its economic base. Although this combination allowed the town to boom during the first quarter of the twentieth century, nationwide downward trends in these areas economically devastated Pawnee by the late 1920s. Despite increasing signs of a major recession throughout the 1920s, especially within agricultural communities such as Pawnee, the depression manifested itself largely with the 1929 Wall Street stock market crash. The Great Depression lasted for over ten years, resulted in prolonged massive unemployment and the worst depression in American history. Following the Wall Street collapse, the recession steadily grew for three years, culminating in 1932. While conditions did not improve after 1932, they ceased the marked downward spiral of the preceding years. The economic stimulus provided by President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal policies and wartime industries finally brought the country out of the depression by about the early 1940s.<sup>3</sup>

During the depression, both rural and urban areas suffered. Unemployment in urban areas created an unprecedented dependence on public welfare which city and state governments were unable to maintain. This inability to sustain urban families resulted in significant homelessness and malnutrition across the nation. Rural areas in the South and Midwest were doubly burdened, enduring not only economic hard times but also a decade-long drought. The "Dust Bowl" of the 1930s, comprising a line of states from the Dakotas to Texas including Oklahoma, devastated farming conditions. Due to declining domestic and foreign markets, overproduction of crops continued to lower farm good prices. In a nationwide trend, many farmers unable to make a living took to the road, searching for a more profitable future.<sup>4</sup>

As a predominately agricultural state, the depression of the 1930s particularly devastated Oklahoma. During the three year period of 1936 to 1938, 500 to 600 hours each year of "sun-obscuring dust" ravaged the southern plains state. By 1939, due to drought conditions and erosion, it was estimated that twenty-five percent of Oklahoma's soil was lost to production.

---

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 115-118, 140-143.

<sup>3</sup>Richard N. Current, etal, American History: A Survey, 2 vols. (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 2:703-705.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 708.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page  17  Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====  
Furthering Oklahoma's agriculture crisis were the large number of tenant farmers in the state. In 1930, sixty-two percent of Oklahoma farmers were tenant farmers, representing the highest rate of tenancy in the Midwest. With no tangible ties to the land, tenant farmers were essentially a dispossessed people searching for sufficient economic means to subsist. Thus, they moved frequently and often lived at below poverty standards. Their plight was compounded during the depression years by the drought conditions which reduced farm incomes even further, leaving them with little choice but to resort to the relief system or migration out of Oklahoma.<sup>5</sup>

While not subjected with dust storms per se, drought still choked the agricultural economy and Pawnee County was afflicted with a grasshopper plague during the 1930s. At the height of the plague, grasshoppers in parts of the county measured six inches deep. To kill the grasshoppers, a mixture of arsenic, bran and molasses was scattered throughout the county by government agents. Although successful in desiccating the pests, the creeks and rivers of the county were clogged with dead insects. Compounding this new development were the numerous fish, which after eating the poisoned grasshoppers, also perished.<sup>6</sup>

Agriculture, however, was not the only industry in the state greatly impacted by the depression. The oil market, another major economic force in Pawnee and the state as a whole, collapsed as factories and mines shut down. The price of oil fell from a \$1.30 a barrel in 1930 to about a \$.01 per barrel in 1932. This resulted in the closing of wells at an unprecedented rate, 21,603 wells in 1931 alone. Statewide, oil and natural gas production fell by about thirty percent, a significant economic drop. Unemployment in the state was at an all-time high. By May 1936, 242,000 workers statewide were without jobs. Due to the inclement economic conditions, migration out of Oklahoma became so intense the term "Okie" became a popular name for the dispossessed workers searching for work in other states, particularly California. With local and state relief agencies increasingly strained beyond capability, the majority of counties in Oklahoma and nationwide were in need of some type of federal

---

<sup>5</sup>Richard W. Fossey, "'Talking Dust Bowl Blues" A Study of Oklahoma's Cultural Identity During the Great Depression," The Chronicles of Oklahoma LV:1 (Spring 1977), 14, 22. See also W. David Baird, "Final Report: WPA Structures Thematic Survey (Phase III), (Stillwater, Oklahoma: Oklahoma State University, 1987): 5.

<sup>6</sup>Franks, Pawnee Pride, 216.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 18 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

relief to alleviate chronic unemployment and its results.<sup>7</sup>

In efforts to stimulate the national economy and assist citizens in distress, President Roosevelt legislated twenty-nine different acts between 1933 and 1939. The bills were structured to sustain various parts of the economy. The majority of acts sought to provide some type of relief for the unemployed. The Federal Emergency Relief Act (FERA) of 1933 was one of the first bills to aid the destitute. This act channeled federal money to state and local agencies, which then dispensed the funds to impoverished families. Other than direct money, relief was dispensed under the auspices of the FERA in the form of limited work relief projects. These projects sought to preserve the dignity of the unemployed by allowing them to work for their money rather than receive an abhorrent handout from the government. The work relief program under the FERA went through several stages of development. Early projects were essentially state projects which happened to use available FERA funds.<sup>8</sup>

An early New Deal-era project in Pawnee sponsored at least in part by the FERA was the construction of Pawnee Lake. Although intended for recreational purposes, the primary function of the lake, located about a mile north of Pawnee, was to provide water for the town. Work on the three hundred acre lake began in 1932 and was finished in February 1933. By August of that year, sufficient rainfall had filled the lake for water to reach the city main. It took just over ten more months for the lake to be filled to capacity and run over the spillway. Pawnee Lake remains an important water source for the community to this day.<sup>9</sup>

In late 1933, the Roosevelt Administration established the Federal Civil Works Authority (CWA) in response to the large scale unemployment still incapacitating the nation. The CWA was considered a separate organization

---

<sup>7</sup>Arrell Morgan Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 220. See also James Ware, "The Sooner NRA: New Deal Recovery in Oklahoma," The Chronicles of Oklahoma LIV:3 (Fall 1976), 341; and, Baird, "Final Report," 5.

<sup>8</sup>Final Report on the WPA Program, 1934-1943 (Washington, D.C.:U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), 2-7. See also William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal (New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 120-123.

<sup>9</sup>The Pawnee (Oklahoma) Courier-Dispatch, 27 June 1935. See also Franks, Pawnee Pride, 217-218.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 19 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

from the FERA although the same people administered both programs with much collaboration in activity. While the CWA was in operation, however, the FERA work relief program was discontinued. Solely a federal program, the CWA employed the jobless in building various public construction projects. At its peak in January 1934, over four million people were employed. Intended only as an interim program, Roosevelt discontinued the CWA in March 1934 due to excessive cost and the fear of creating a permanent relief class.<sup>10</sup>

The FERA took over for the terminated CWA, establishing the Emergency Work Relief Program to continue the work of the CWA by finishing its projects and undertaking new public works projects. Under the Emergency Work Relief Program, work relief projects fell largely in the jurisdiction of the state but with limited federal regulations. These regulations mandated that employment was granted through local relief agencies who determined need and pay scale; projects had to fall within broad FERA categories; the work had to meet certain federal regulations; and, all projects had to have a sponsor. Although effective in assisting the destitute for two years, the FERA ceased operation in May 1935. Critically, the FERA served as a model for subsequent work relief programs.<sup>11</sup>

About ten months before the FERA was discontinued, the program approved a project to construct a swimming pool below the Pawnee Lake dam on the west side. Beginning in late July 1934, "... about twenty men and two teams..." were employed on the project which was estimated to cost \$1,100. The city was to pay approximately \$220 with the FERA paying the remaining eighty percent.<sup>12</sup> For unknown reasons, however, the project was not completed by May 1935 when the FERA ceased operations.

The Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 replaced the 1933 Federal Emergency Relief Act. Believing that "work rather than direct relief should be the keystone of Federal policy with respect to needy employables," the new act again authorized a program of federal relief employment. Roosevelt legislated the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in May 1935 to provide jobs for the unemployed. In 1939, the Federal Works Agency incorporated the Works Progress Administration, renaming it the Works Projects Administration. The WPA continued in operation until 1943, at which time the economic stimulus

---

<sup>10</sup>Final Report, 2-7. See also Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt, 120-123.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>The Pawnee Courier-Dispatch, 2 August 1934.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 20 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

provided by the wartime industries lessened the need for the WPA and the federal monies allocated to the WPA were required elsewhere.<sup>13</sup>

During its eight year existence, the WPA worked on two principal types of projects: service projects and engineering and construction projects. Numerous projects of both categories were undertaken in Oklahoma and Pawnee County. Service projects employed clerical, technical and professional workers of both sexes. Types of programs undertaken by the WPA as service projects included adult education, nursery schools, library services, recreation programs, museum projects, music projects, art programs, writers' projects, theater programs, research and public records projects, sewing projects, school lunch projects, among various other social service projects.<sup>14</sup>

Engineering and construction projects, however, comprised the majority of WPA employment, about seventy-five percent until the spring of 1940. Construction projects were selected on the basis that they provided "useful work to the unemployed at a given time and place," the end result was of functional use to the community and that a sponsor be available. The construction of public utilities, recreation facilities and public buildings account for about a third of all engineering and construction projects. Public utility projects included water and sewer systems and sewage disposal plants. Recreation facility projects primarily consisted of work undertaken on city parks and included construction of numerous swimming and wading pools with related bathhouses across the state. Public building projects involved WPA labor on education and recreation buildings, hospitals, military and naval buildings, prisons and state, county and city government buildings. Nationwide, the WPA constructed and improved numerous airports and airways, city halls, courthouses, libraries, community buildings, highways and streets, parks, cemeteries, armories, schools and natural resource conservation facilities as a part of their engineering and construction projects.<sup>15</sup>

The WPA work force was drawn from the unemployed living within the project area. Workers were qualified to work on WPA projects by the local Public Welfare Department, working through the National Reemployment Service. WPA employment was restricted to only one family member, usually the head of the family. Initially, the age requirement for workers was set at sixteen years,

---

<sup>13</sup>Final Report, 7.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 59-71.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 47-48, 50-52.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 21 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

however, this was raised to a minimum of eighteen years in 1938. Although there was not a maximum age limit, agencies generally did not hire persons over sixty-five years of age due to their eligibility for Social Security. Congress made no restriction on the employment of non-US citizens during the first year of the WPA's existence. Following several acts which progressively restricted the employment of aliens by the WPA, in 1939, Congress prohibited the employment of aliens on WPA projects and each worker was required to sign an affidavit affirming their US citizenship. A hiring preference was not instituted until the ERA Act of 1937 which gave preference to the employment of veterans, which was reinforced in 1941 with the added requirement that the spouse of unemployed veterans and unmarried widows of veterans be given the same preference as veterans. Due to conflicting reasoning, preferential employment based on need was not instituted until 1939. At that time, the WPA established two types of needs: those with no income and those with insufficient income to exist at a subsistence level.<sup>16</sup>

The WPA paid a flat "security wage," which was slightly higher than direct relief payments but lower than comparable private employment pay. By 1937, the average pay in Oklahoma was thirty-six dollars a month for unskilled labor. Skilled and semi-skilled workers received higher wages depending on the skill required and the experience of the workman. During its first four years, the WPA offered continuous employment as available within the region. Subsequently, the WPA enforced an eighteen month ceiling on employment. However, the worker was eligible for reemployment after thirty days and a recertification of need.<sup>17</sup>

Although a federal work program, the WPA only facilitated public works projects nationwide. The WPA did not initiate or undertake projects by itself. WPA guidelines required that a "tax-supported public body" sponsor the project which had to result in a permanent and useful addition to the community. The sponsors could be federal, state or local agencies. The majority of projects were developed by county, city, town and village governments and agencies. The project sponsor provided partial monetary support, usually in the form of land and materials, as well as engineering and architectural plans and specifications. The WPA had no fixed percentage of the project cost which the individual sponsor was required to pay. On the average, the cost to the sponsoring agency fluctuated between twenty and thirty percent of the total cost. In addition, the sponsor completed the

---

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 17-21.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 21. See also The Farmer's Weekly Stroud (Oklahoma) Democrat, 19 February 1937.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 22 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

project if the WPA was unable to and maintained and operated the finished project. Ownership of the project belonged to the sponsor upon completion.<sup>18</sup>

The WPA handled the administration of the project and provided the majority of funds to meet wages. WPA regulations capped federal funds for any one project at about \$52,000 to avoid competition with other Depression era programs, especially the Public Works Administration (PWA). Another New Deal public works program, the PWA did not concern itself primarily with aiding the jobless as the WPA did; rather, the PWA's goal was to stimulate business. In order to circumvent this monetary restriction, WPA projects often received several rounds of funding under the guise of additions to the original project. Other projects, for a variety of reasons, also exceeded the WPA allowance.<sup>19</sup>

WPA projects were designed to maximize the number of laborers and the length of employment. Thus, the maximum amount of relief was obtained through every project. To facilitate this goal, WPA workers labored continuously on every aspect of the project from clearing the site to manufacturing furnishings. In Oklahoma, the use of native stone for WPA buildings kept project costs low and employed many quarrying and dressing the stone for use. Other materials necessary, such as wood bracing and roof material, were usually obtained locally so as to stimulate the local economy as much as possible.

Work relief projects continued relatively uninterrupted in many communities as the federal government made the transition from the FERA to the WPA. Many projects authorized as FERA projects continued as WPA projects. This was the case in the construction of the swimming pool at Pawnee Lake. By 16 May 1935, a project was approved "...for completion of the swimming pool, the sanding of the beaches and the building of the barbecue pits." It was anticipated this project would "...bring Pawnee lake into a class with the nicest and most convenient pleasure resorts in the State."<sup>20</sup>

For unknown reasons, it took more than two years after the WPA project was approved for the pool to be opened to the public. By 1 July 1937, the recently opened pool had "...become quite an attraction here and many from this

---

<sup>18</sup>"Questions and Answers on the WPA," (Available in the Vertical Files, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: December 1939), 6-7, 16. See also Final Report, 9-10.

<sup>19</sup>Final Report, 9-10. See also "Questions and Answers," 10-12.

<sup>20</sup>The Pawnee Courier-Dispatch, 16 May 1935.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 23 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

community and elsewhere are seeking this resort as means of obtaining relief from the intense heat." In addition to the "huge pool" which measured 600 feet in length and "...some 250 in width," the project included the clearing of trees for parking space on the hill west of the pool and construction of stairs "...from the top of the hill to the pool." The city had also engaged the high school coach, Claude Neet, and his assistants to serve as life guards at the pool. Unfortunately, "Funds were not available at this time to equip the pool as it should be, but later dressing rooms and other improvements are expected to be erected and one of the finest pools will be the result."<sup>21</sup>

Construction of the bathhouse at the Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool was underway by the following year. However, for the 1938 swimming season, the Mayor of Pawnee, J.A. McCollum, noted "The bath-house will not be ready for this season." Although work was "...getting along nicely...and by the time another season rolls around it will be completed..." for the 1938 season, the bathhouse area was "...torn up, more or less, so far as it is concerned..."<sup>22</sup>

As indicated by the Mayor, construction on the bathhouse building was apparently completed by the following year. However, in May 1939, another WPA project was approved to "...landscape and develop the area surrounding the bathhouse." Projected to cost a total of \$9,067, the new project included the construction of retaining walls, stairways and sidewalks between the pool and bathhouse. The city as sponsor of the project was to provide \$2,077 with the WPA expending \$6,990.<sup>23</sup>

Although the final phase of the pool and bathhouse project was not quite completed, a dedication for the building was held on Friday, 30 June 1939. The all-day celebration, planned to replace the usual 4<sup>th</sup> of July festivities, included a speaking program from 2 to 4 in the afternoon at which Ron Stephens, State WPA Administrator, local officials and various other politicians were invited to speak. This was followed by "...tribal dances on the sandy beach at the edge of the pool" by Pawnee Indians and a Bathing Beauty Contest with prizes awarded to the "...most handsome boy and most beautiful girl in bathing costume...". The Pawnee High School band played music throughout the day at the lake with Dap Peters and His Big Little Band taking over in the afternoon to play dance music through the evening. As "...all efforts are being made to make the opening of the recreation center the

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 1 July 1937.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 26 May 1938.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 18 May 1939.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 24 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

outstanding day of the vacation months," all of the businesses in Pawnee were asked to close, at least during the speaking program.<sup>24</sup>

By 20 July 1939, the railings around both landings of the bathhouse stairs were complete. Staying open nightly until 9:15, the pool and bathhouse attracted "Quite a number of people..." including many out-of-towners and some out-of-staters. In addition to a family from Yale, Oklahoma, which visited the pool three days in a row the week following the bathhouse dedication, swimmers from the Oklahoma towns of Ralston, Fairfax, Enid, Guthrie, Oklahoma City, Perry, Cleveland, Hominy came to enjoy the new amenities. The local newspaper also noted visitors from Dallas and Baytown, Texas. Use surely continued unabated until the pool and bathhouse were forced to close due to the opening of a new school year and changing seasons.<sup>25</sup>

The following year, the swim season was kicked off on Sunday, 19 May 1940 with the short first day hours of 2 to 6 o'clock. As in the years previous, children were charged ten cents a swim while adults paid twenty cents. The city also sold coupon books which allowed three extra swims for the price of ten. Because "The swimming pool is calculated to afford this community a supervised recreation," a few simple rules were enforced by the four life guards. This included no profanity or indecent conduct, as well as the prohibition on eating lunch at or near the pool. Within a month, the pool was open until 8 o'clock to allow business people an opportunity to swim. Night swimming was subsequently permitted.<sup>26</sup>

The Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse remained in use as an important community recreation center through the end of the period of significance as defined by the current National Register fifty year mark, 1953. The pool and bathhouse functioned as originally intended, however, until about 1980 when they were closed to the public. At that time, concerns over water quality caused the city to construct an in-ground pool inside the city limits. Subsequently, the historic pool and bathhouse have been incorporated into the Pawnee Environmental Education Center which consists of twenty-five acres of various eco-systems below and adjacent to the dam. At this time, the city is also working on plans to return both facilities to their historic use.

---

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 22 June 1939.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 20 July 1939.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 16 May 1940 and 20 June 1940.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 25 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====  
In addition to their historic significance as recreational outlets for the Pawnee community, the swimming pool and bathhouse are significant for their association with the FERA and WPA, critical components of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal-era programs. Nationally from its inauguration in 1935 to its termination in 1943, the WPA expended more than 10.75 billion dollars on a diversity of projects. An additional 2.8 billion dollars was provided by various sponsors on WPA projects. Almost eighty-nine percent of the WPA expenditure was used for wages, with seventeen percent of the sponsors' funds spent on labor costs. Approximately 8.5 million individuals nationwide benefitted from WPA employment at one time or another. At the peak of WPA employment in Oklahoma, January 1936, 94,821 persons were toiling on approved projects. By March 1937, 2,971 projects had been approved with 2,581 of those projects being undertaken by the WPA. Total, Oklahoma received over 185 million dollars from the WPA for a multitude of projects statewide. Sponsors statewide expended almost another sixty million dollars. Combined, the Oklahoma economy was boosted by over 232 million dollars in eight years. The projects represent an investment of more than 415 million hours of manpower earning a total of over 140 million dollars in wages for the state of Oklahoma.<sup>27</sup>

The infusion of this much-needed work and money into hard pressed communities relieved the pressure of the unemployed on local, state and national economies. During the nine month period between 1 April 1934 and 31 December 1934, Pawnee County received \$37,780 in drought and work relief allocations under the FERA. Although a road construction job was the largest project in the county during the period, there was a total of fifty-one projects on-going within the county. In all, \$70,993 was the estimated total value of approved FERA work relief projects in the county up to 8 January 1935.<sup>28</sup>

By March 1936, nearly six hundred Pawnee County heads of household were registered for work with the WPA. Representing an average family group of four, these workers thus represented 2,384 dependents. Once again, road-related projects employed the highest number, accounting for the employment of 382 at work on about 65 miles of road in the county. By October 1936, the work quota within the county had risen to 798, including both the WPA and drought relief quotas. At the time, 710 needy employables were working on approved projects. Split among eleven projects, \$169,843.07 had been expended within the county. Within a year, the work quota in the Tulsa district, including Pawnee County, was slashed sixty percent. Nonetheless, work on a

<sup>27</sup> Final Report, 101, 115, and 124.

<sup>28</sup> The Pawnee Courier-Dispatch, 17 January 1935.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section	<u>8</u>	Page	<u>26</u>	<u>Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse</u>
				name of property
				<u>Pawnee County, Oklahoma</u>
				county and State

=====

variety of WPA projects continued to employ many within the county. In addition to the bathhouse project, Pawnee County received a major economic boost in 1939 with the approval of a \$109,400 project to improve farm to market secondary roads.<sup>29</sup>

All told, through the creation of make-work projects which provided an undeniable lasting benefit, the FERA and WPA poured solely needed funds into the local and state economies during a period of unprecedented hard times. In addition to boosting the economies, these programs had a direct impact on aiding Americans who were not living at even subsistence levels.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

In addition to their historic significance, the Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse are also noteworthy for their architecture. Both resources embody the basic WPA building philosophy in Oklahoma. Additionally, the two resources create a unique recreation facility within the local community which has never been equaled.

The majority of WPA buildings in Oklahoma, including the Pawnee Municipal Bathhouse, reflect a common identity unique to this New Deal era program. Through a similarity in certain modest stylistic and structural characteristics, WPA buildings are easily distinguishable. WPA buildings usually exhibit a high level of craftsmanship, similarity in basic design and restrained use of architectural features and decorative details. WPA buildings also reflect an enduring, rustic, functional fortitude compatible with the trying times of the Great Depression. These varied unifying characteristics can be loosely categorized as the WPA Standardized Style.

Oklahoma WPA projects, such as the Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse, frequently utilized native sandstone or limestone for construction material. The native stone was used in both uncut and cut form. The use of the native stone fulfilled two primary requirements of the WPA: critically, the stone was readily available at an affordable cost; and, use of the stone was highly labor intensive, thus elongating the length of employment available on the project and the number of workers needed. WPA workers procured the stone from local quarries often opened especially for WPA projects.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 17 January 1935, 12 March 1936, 28 May 1936, 22 October 1936, 23 September 1937, and 18 May 1939.

<sup>30</sup>Baird, "Final Report," 12-15.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page  27  Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

Although the majority of workmen on WPA projects were unskilled, a high level of craftsmanship was frequently apparent. The use of native stone for construction material often required an intricate ability of stone masonry. The level of skill apparent in many buildings can be attributed to the underlying premise of the WPA -- extended employment. The WPA program, generally not hampered by oppressive deadlines, allowed the workmen time to improve their skill as the building took shape. Additionally, many WPA workmen developed a previously unrecognized aptitude for the work following employment on one or more buildings. The stonework on the bathhouse is particularly notable as an excellent example of WPA workmanship.

WPA buildings favored simplification in architectural style. This is partly due to the limited construction experience of many of the project laborers. Nonetheless, the simplification in stylistic features resulted in a rustic, functional style of building loosely categorized as the WPA Standardized Style. Elimination of intricate structural designs, ornate architectural features and elaborate decoration were common attributes of WPA buildings.<sup>31</sup> Also identifying were certain decorative details, such as round arched entrances, stone or red brick chimneys, ribbon windows, extended eaves, exposed rafters, chimney pots and quoins. In the WPA Standardized Style, however, utilization of only one or more features was common. Standard WPA features found on the Pawnee Municipal Bathhouse include a typical rectangular design of the top floor with a projected gabled entry porch, round arched entrances and quoins. Although seemingly atypical of the style, the elaborate stairway on the east side is compatible with the WPA Standardized Style as a necessary element due to the unusual nature of the building site. The high degree of artistry of the stairs is attributable to the high level of craftsmanship frequently evidenced in WPA buildings and particularly the Pawnee Municipal Bathhouse.

The WPA constructed a total of thirty-four swimming pools in Oklahoma. Covering a composite surface area of 230,323 square feet, these pools, along with other WPA-built recreation facilities, "...played an important part in keeping children out of bad environments." Unfortunately, the program did not enumerate the total number of bathhouses erected in the state. These are lumped into a category generally designated "other recreational buildings," of which the WPA built 205 and reconstructed 67. Unlike the WPA's school building or armory programs, the pools and bathhouses constructed in Oklahoma do not follow a standardized design, although most exhibit characteristics of the WPA Standardized Style. Due to the variety of expression and the large number of resources of these types, each resource must be architecturally

<sup>31</sup>Baird, "Final Report," 16-17.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   8   Page  28  Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

evaluated within its own local context.<sup>32</sup>

Readily identifiable as WPA-built, the Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse stand out architecturally within their context. Located outside of the city limits, relatively by themselves, the pool and bathhouse remain as architectural testimony to the social ills and remedies of the 1930s. Representing the efforts of the various levels of government to resist the debilitating effects of the worst depression in American history, the pool and bathhouse possess that certain fortitude and style frequently evidenced in the WPA building program.

Overall, the Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse are excellent examples of the WPA Standardized Style as applied to swimming pools and bathhouses. Further, the resources are architecturally unique within the local community. The pool and bathhouse are also historically significant for their association with the FERA and WPA. These New Deal programs played an important role in aiding the rebuilding of local, state and national economies during the Great Depression of the 1930s. In addition to contributing a lasting legacy to Oklahoma's built environment, these programs employed the jobless on worthwhile public service projects. The pool and bathhouse were critical components of the recreational opportunities available in Pawnee from their construction in the late 1930s through 1953 and beyond to the 1980s when "modern" facilities disrupted their use. However, as evidenced by the city's interest in re-opening both resources with minimal required change to the historic design of both, the permanent usefulness of the project is obvious.

---

<sup>32</sup>Final Report, 1-2. See also Pawnee Courier-Dispatch, 6 April 1939.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section   9   Page  29  Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baird, W. David. "Final Report: WPA Structures Thematic Survey (Phase III)". Stillwater, Oklahoma: Oklahoma State University, 1987.

Current, Richard N., etal. American History: A Survey. 2 vols. New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987.

Gibson, Arrell Morgan. Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981.

The Farmer's Weekly Stroud (Oklahoma) Democrat, 19 February 1937.

Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-1943. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946.

Fossey, Richard W. "'Talking Dust Bowl Blues" A Study of Oklahoma's Cultural Identity During the Great Depression," The Chronicles of Oklahoma LV:1 (Spring 1977), 12-33.

Franks, Kenny A. and Paul F. Lambert. Pawnee Pride. Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: Oklahoma Heritage Association, 1994.

Leuchtenburg, William E. Franklin D Roosevelt and the New Deal. New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1963.

The Pawnee (Oklahoma) Courier-Dispatch, 2 August 1934; 17 January 1935; 16 May 1935; 27 June 1935; 12 March 1936; 28 May 1936; 22 October 1936; 1 July 1937; 23 September 1937; 26 May 1938; 6 April 1939; 18 May 1939; 15 June 1939; 22 June 1939; 20 July 1939; 16 May 1940; 20 June 1940

"Questions and Answers on the WPA," Available in the Vertical Files, Oklahoma Historical Society Research Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. December 1939.

Ware, James. "The Sooner NRA: New Deal Recovery in Oklahoma." The Chronicles of Oklahoma LIV:3 (Fall 1976), 339-351.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 10 Page 30 Pawnee Municipal Swimming Pool and Bathhouse  
name of property  
Pawnee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries form a large square, encompassing roughly 9 acres and bordered on the north by the blacktopped road over the dam, on the east and south by gravel walks which separate the pool from surrounding ponds and other natural features of the area, and, on the west by the bathhouse parking lot. The boundaries are as follows: beginning at the intersection of the paved road over the Pawnee Lake Dam and the gravel parking lot to the west of the Bathhouse, go approximately 625 feet east along the dam road to the east side of the swimming pool bordered by a gravel walk, then go about 625 feet south down the dam embankment and along the gravel walk to another gravel walk bordering the south side of the pool, then go about 625 feet west along this gravel/dirt walk to the gravel parking lot adjacent to the bathhouse, then go approximately 625 feet along the parking lot to the point of beginning. Southwest 1/4 of the Northeast 1/4, Section 30, Township 22 North, Range 5 East.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries include the property historically associated with the swimming pool and bathhouse. The boundaries were determined by visual inspection which revealed a clear demarcation along the boundary lines between the two primary resources and other features of Pawnee Lake. Although associated with the 300-acre lake, the pool and bathhouse merit individual nomination for their historic and architectural significance to the local community.