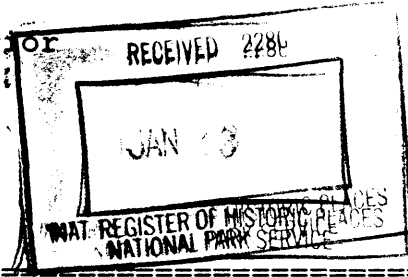


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Olustee Public Library and Park

other names/site number _____

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number South side 4th St. between C & D sts. not for publication N/A
city or town Olustee vicinity N/A
state Oklahoma code OK county Jackson code 065
zip code 73560

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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



1-19-06

Signature of certifying official

Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

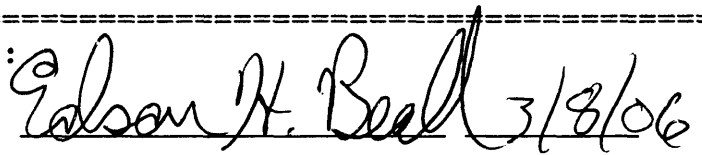
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau


4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register

 3/8/06

other (explain):



Signature of Keeper

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>1</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>0</u>	<u>2</u> structures
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> objects
<u>3</u>	<u>4</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

=====
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)

Social History

Period of Significance 1920-1956

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

Significant Dates 1920
1936

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 1.5 Acres MOL

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>14</u>	<u>461200</u>	<u>3822810</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u>N/A</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 Cynthia Savage, Architectural Historian, for the Western Trail
Historical Society

organization ARCH Consulting date October 2005

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 Town of Olustee, Brad Pryor, Mayor

street & number 105 East 4th Street telephone 580/648-2288

city or town Olustee state OK zip code 73560

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Olustee Public Library and Park
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SUMMARY

The Olustee Public Library and Park, located in Olustee, Jackson County, Oklahoma, consists of a block-sized, traditional, town park with a native stone, 18 X 35, WPA Standardized style building in the center. The park originated in 1920as part of the New State Women's Club (NSC) activities. The public library building was erected in the park in 1936 as a project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Like the park, the library building project was initiated by the NSC with the club soliciting the WPA to construct the building and operating the library until its closure in the 1990s. Both resources have always been owned by the town of Olustee with the NSC taking an active role in maintaining the resources.

As the dominant resource, the library defines the category of the property as a building. Maintaining a higher degree of integrity, the library and its related walks convey more clearly the civic improvements sought and achieved by the NSC. However, it would be impossible to separate the library from the park. Although maintaining a lesser degree of integrity with modern park amenities having been added beginning in the 1970s, the park maintains a notable integrity of feeling and association that indisputably link the park to the library building and the NSC.

Prominently located in the center of the park is the public library. The native stone building, laid in a random ashlar pattern with projecting beaded mortar joints, has a front-gabled, asphalt-covered roof and a concrete foundation. The windows are metal, six-over-three, hopper on the sides and metal, four-over-two, hopper on the front and rear. The windows have painted, concrete, lug sills and flat headers with keystones. The wood slab door is not original. The low-pitched, gabled, entry porch roof, supported with slanted wood supports, is also not original but added within five years of construction. The entry porch has stone wing walls with a wide, painted, concrete cap. Decorative details include stone buttresses, a concrete coping along the parapeted gables, a wood cornice on the side elevations, a painted concrete panel above the door reading "LIBRARY" and a stone cornerstone with the letters "WPA" inscribed in it and located below an inset metal plaque reading "USA/1936/WPA." In addition to the change in the front door, the only other nonhistoric alterations to the building consist of the metal grills over the windows for security reasons. The interior of the building, including plaster walls, wood bookshelves and library books, remains remarkably intact.

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Immediately off the northeast corner of the building is a metal flagpole set in a concrete base. A granite stone set into the concrete indicates it was erected in about 1990; as such, the flagpole is a noncontributing object as it was not present during the period of significance. Extending from the front of the library is a concrete walk that ends with two native stone entry markers which are identical to the building with projected beaded mortar joints and painted concrete caps. North of the markers is the grassy ditch which separates the park from the adjoining street. Aligning with the outside edges of the building, there is a line of rocks which extend nearly the length of the concrete sidewalk. To the west of the west entry marker is a water faucet set in a concrete base. Traversing the west side of the north half of the block is a grassy walk outlined in stones. Due to their connection and historic association the walks and markers are considered one contributing object. The east side is void of any sidewalk markings.

The overall park is typical of town parks with numerous trees, a tennis court, playground equipment, picnic pavilion and an old train car. The trees are an important element of the original landscape of the park. The other resources are modern additions to the park to facilitate use of the site. Added probably in the 1970s, the playground equipment, consisting of two sets of metal swings, a large metal slide, a double teeter-toter, a metal climbing toy and a metal and wood merry-go-round, are located on the west side of the park, towards the middle. The merry-go-round is situated slightly south of the other equipment, towards the southwest corner of the park. Due to their common material, small scale and association, the playground equipment is counted as one noncontributing object. In the southeast corner of the park, there is a metal picnic pavilion with a concrete pad, gabled metal roof, a small metal barbecue and a long picnic table. Directly north of the picnic pavilion are the 1980s tennis courts. The double courts have an uneven chain link fence surrounding them with two wood benches inside the enclosure and three just outside the north side. On the opposite side of the park in the northwest corner is another chain-linked enclosure with an old Frisco caboose in it. The caboose was brought to the park in the 1990s. All of the above-mentioned resources are noncontributing to park, as they were not present during the period of significance. However, due to their smaller scale and compatibility with the function of the park, they do not destroy the overall historic integrity of the resource.

The park and library are located on the south side of 4th Street which also serves as the main thoroughfare through the community. They are located immediately east of Olustee's central business district which currently covers

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less than two blocks. Residential construction of various ages and types characterize the blocks north and east of the park and library. The block directly south of the park is divided by the railroad tracks with little development on the north side.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION OLUSTEE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Constructed in 1936 by the WPA, the Olustee Public Library is an excellent example of the WPA Standardized style. Some of the defining characteristics of the WPA Standardized style evident in the Olustee Public Library are the use of native stone; restrained use of stylistic influences; allusions to the Classical Revival style, a style more popular for early WPA buildings; and, most importantly, an enduring, rustic, functional fortitude compatible with the trying times of the Great Depression.

The relatively small building measures just 18 feet by 35 feet, including the porch, and is located in the center of the historic Olustee town park. The building has a concrete foundation, native stone walls and an asphalt-covered, front-gabled roof with native stone parapets. The stone walls have projecting beaded mortar joints, found on many early New Deal-era buildings in Oklahoma. The native stone walls of the Olustee library are laid in a random ashlar pattern. The single door is nonoriginal, wood, slab. The windows are historic, metal, hopper with lug sills and flat headers with keystones. Both the sills and headers are concrete. All of the windows have been covered with metal grates to prevent unauthorized entry into the building. Decorative details include stone buttresses, a concrete name panel, a stone cornerstone inscribed with WPA and a metal WPA plaque noting the year of construction. Christmas lights have been strung along the front and sides of the building; the lights apparently remain year-round as photographs of the building were taken in August.

The north elevation has the buildings only entry. A wood slab door has replaced the historic, wood, glazed, paneled door. Above the door, slightly obscured by the porch roof, is a flat concrete header with a keystone, matching those above the windows. The centrally located, entry porch now has a low-pitched, front-gabled, asphalt-covered roof supported by slanted wood supports. The original porch roof was flat as evident in a 1936 newspaper photograph of the building in the NSC scrapbooks. A photograph in the 1940-1941 scrapbook of the NSC shows a new porch roof under construction. The porch has a concrete step and native stone wing walls, also laid in a random ashlar pattern with projecting beaded mortar joints and capped with concrete. The wood door, wood elements of the porch roof and the concrete of the wing walls are painted the same light brown. Flanking the door are single, metal, four-over-two, hopper

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windows which have been covered with metal grates. Remaining in the east window is a sign reading Olustee Public Library. On either side of the windows are stone buttresses. The buttresses project slightly from the wall with slanted stone tops. The buttresses reach the same height as the top of the windows. On the east buttress, towards the middle, is a large stone inscribed with WPA. Above this is a metal plaque which reads U.S.A./1936/W.P.A. Centrally located above the windows is the concrete name panel. The panel is engraved with all capital letters reading LIBRARY. The panel is painted the same color as the concrete headers and sills with the incised letters being black. Above this is, on the stone parapet, is a metal light. The stone parapet has a concrete coping, painted to match the other concrete elements.

The east and west elevations are nearly identical. The only difference between the two elevations is the electrical box located on the west elevation, towards the south side. A wood cornice and boxed eave extend the length of both sides; now ornamented with Christmas lights. Each symmetrical elevation includes two metal, six-over-three, hopper windows, covered with metal grates. Each window has a lug sill and flat header with a keystone. The sill and header are concrete painted a light brown. On the outside edges of the elevations are stone buttresses, identical to the buttresses on the front and rear elevations. At ground level and centrally located on both the east and west elevations is a small vent opening with a metal grate. On both sides, a concrete block partially covers the vent.

The south elevation features two central, metal, six-over-two, hopper windows. These are the only windows on the building to have continuous concrete sills and headers; the lug sills and flat headers with keystones otherwise are identical to those on the other elevations. Centrally located above the windows is a metal light. On both ends of the elevations are stone buttresses with slanted stone caps. Like the north elevation, the upper wall has a parapet with a concrete coping.

Off the northeast corner of the building is a noncontributing, metal flagpole set in a concrete base. The flagpole was erected in about 1990 as a marble inscription in the base reads IN MEMORY OF/DENNIS W./FARMER/3-10-63 RESERVE OFFICER 9-15-90. Extending from the front of the building is a concrete walk which terminates about 97 feet from the building at two stone entry markers. Matching the building, the markers are laid in a random ashlar pattern with projecting beaded mortar joints. The markers are topped with wide concrete caps, painted brown to match the concrete trim on the building. Also beginning at the building, just off both outside edges of the north elevation, is a set of two lines of stones. The stones are set on edge so they stick up. The stones extend on both sides of the concrete walk, ending short of the entry

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markers. Extending west from the concrete walk is another walk outlined in stones set in the grass. Unlike the stones along the library walk, the sidewalk markers are predominately flat to the ground. Set at the junction of the stone markers on the west side is a concrete and metal water faucet of indeterminate age. Due to their association and common material, the walks, water faucet and entry markers are counted as one contributing object.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION OF THE OLUSTEE PUBLIC LIBRARY

The interior of the library consists of a single room. The walls and ceiling are plaster and the floor is wood. The windows are uncovered. The walls are lined with wood bookshelves, all yet filled with the books of the library. The floor furnace is located in about the center of the room. The library closed in the 1990s when the NSC disbanded. The town continues to maintain the building, leaving the contents virtually untouched.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION OF THE PARK

Block 33 of the Olustee Original Townsite was designated as the town park beginning in 1920. The block is identical to the other full blocks in the original townsite of Olustee. Although the block was initially platted into lots, for unknown reasons, it apparently never underwent any type of commercial or residential development. The original plans for the park included numerous trees. The historic trees are heavier along the south side of the park but trees marking the north and west perimeters are also evident. The erection of the playground equipment, train car and tennis courts possibly displaced some of the trees, although as living resources the trees would also have been affected by disease and age.

In the center of the park is the contributing, native stone, WPA-constructed library, erected in 1936 and described in detail above. As originally envisioned, the park included a building for the public library which originated in 1907 as part of the NSC's official responsibilities. Immediately off the northeast corner of the building is a noncontributing flagpole. Extending from the front of the building is a stone-edged walk which terminates in two stone entry markers. To the west of the entry markers is another stone lined walk. The walks and entry markers form one contributing object.

Directly west of the library building is the noncontributing playground equipment, probably added in the 1970s. The playground equipment includes a triple-swing swing set on the west side, a climbing toy next to this, then a double-baby-swing swing set, then a large slide and, finally just west of the

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library building, a double teeter-totter. These toys are all metal, painted silver and lined up in a row. South of the baby-swing swing set and in front of a tree is a simple wooden bench. Set slightly apart from the other equipment is the metal and wood merry-go-round. Located south of the other equipment in an open area, the merry-go-round is of the same vintage as the swings and slide. For the purposes of this nomination, the playground equipment is counted as one noncontributing object.

In the northwest corner of the park is a noncontributing, red, Frisco caboose with the number BN 11536. The caboose was likely donated to the town in the early 1990s as the car is visible on the 17 February 1995 USGS aerial view of Olustee. The red caboose is encircled by a short chain link fence with the opening set on the southeast side. The car is set diagonal from the library building on a car-length expanse of railroad tracks.

Occupying the northeast section of the park are the noncontributing tennis courts. According to local residents, the double tennis courts were erected in the 1980s. The courts consist of two concrete pads divided by a grassy strip. Along the grassy strip are two wood and metal benches. Around the outside edge of the courts is more grass with a chainlink fence separating the courts from the rest of the park. The fence is taller on the north and south sides to prevent the ball from going outside of the enclosure. The west court also doubles as a basketball court with metal hoops located on the north and south sides.

Directly south of the tennis courts is the noncontributing metal picnic pavilion. Likely added at the same time as the playground equipment in the 1970s, the picnic pavilion has a concrete floor with metal poles, painted silver, supporting the blue, metal, gable roof. In addition to the long, metal and wood picnic table, the picnic pavilion includes a small metal barbeque and a metal trash can.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

The library building has undergone very little alteration. In the early 1940s, the porch roof was changed to a low-pitched, front gable from a flat roof. Occurring during the period of significance, this change has little impact on the integrity of the building. Nonhistoric changes to the building consist of the replacement of the original, wood, glazed, paneled door with a wood slab door at an unknown time and placement of metal grates over all the windows. Both of these alterations relate to security of the building and neither has a

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major impact on the library's integrity. Overall, the library maintains an excellent degree of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling and association.

The park has been the recipient of several noncontributing objects since the 1970s, including the playground equipment, picnic pavilion, tennis courts and train car. However, these objects and structures do not destroy the integrity of the park. As originally envisioned, the park was to provide the community with a site for entertainment and recreation. The addition of these objects and structures to the site have allowed the park to maintain its relevance in modern times. The playground equipment, consisting of two swing sets, a slide, a climbing toy, a teeter-totter and merry-go-round, are commonly found in parks and, even collectively, do not dramatically alter the park's historic character. Likewise, the picnic pavilion is of insignificant scale to impact the park's integrity. The tennis courts are of more concern but located on the eastern edge of the park and with historic trees on the north and south sides, the courts do not destroy the park's overall ability to convey its historic significance. The train car also does not impede the park's retention of feeling and association. Overall, the Olustee Park retains sufficient integrity to convey the intent and association of the civic improvements undertaken by the NSC.

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SUMMARY

The Olustee Public Library and Park are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A for their association with the New State Womens Club. The New State Womens Club (NSC) was formed in 1907, the same year Oklahoma became a state, hence the name. The club was federated in 1909, joining the Oklahoma State Federation of Womens Clubs and the national General Federation of Womens Clubs. The stated objective of the Olustee study club was ...social and intellectual culture and civic improvement.¹ In addition to various other activities, such as working in the Red Cross rooms during World War I and taking refreshments to the Altus U.S.O. during World War II, the club members actively sought to improve living conditions in Olustee by hosting annual clean-up days, sponsoring the upkeep of the cemetery and providing money to the school for various needs, such as a rug and velvet curtains for the stage. Two of the more enduring and tangible activities of the club was the erection of a public library for the community and a town park. While both of these entities are and have been owned by the town of Olustee, the NSC was instrumental in bringing both projects to fruition. Due to the location of the library building in the center of the town park, the two projects are also incontrovertibly connected.

The period of significance for the property begins in 1920 when the town park was developed. The park was a major material step in the NSCs efforts to improve the quality of life in Olustee. The town of Olustee quickly assumed ownership of the park property, however, the NSC remained actively involved in improving the site for decades, including procuring the library building. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) constructed the library building in the center of the park in 1936. While the technical sponsor of the project was the town of Olustee, the NSC was instrumental in securing the project and provided funds to ensure completion of the building. The NSC also provided the books in the library with members serving as librarian until the 1990s. The period of significance for the property ends in 1956, conforming with the current National Registers fifty-year mark.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

¹Melba Moore Smith, History of the New State Club, (unpublished manuscript, located with scrapbooks of the New State Womens Club, Olustee Public Library, Olustee, Oklahoma, 1956).

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In 1890, the womens club movement opened in the newly organized Oklahoma Territory with local groups forming in Guthrie and Oklahoma City. This same year, womens clubs across the country attended a convention in New York City which culminated in ratification of a constitution for the General Federation of Womens Clubs (GFWC). Six years later in 1896, the first womens club met in Atoka, Indian Territory. Uniting the clubs of the Twin Territories, the Oklahoma and Indian Territory Federation of Womens Clubs was started in 1898 and joined the national GFWC the same year. Numbering a total of 77 clubs in 1903, the club movement continued to expand despite the withdrawal of ten Indian Territory clubs in December of that year. The ten clubs, composed of predominately Native American women, desired an organization, aptly named the Indian Territory Federation of Womens Clubs, for and of Native American women that would be recognized on an equal level to that of the other, predominately Euro-American, clubs. The two organizations remained separate until November 1908. Subsequently, the name of the state organization was changed to the Oklahoma State Federation of Womens Clubs.²

The womens clubs were organized as ...study and self-culture groups. Topics studied by the individual clubs included American history, poetry, art, as well as political issues of the day, such as suffrage and child labor laws. Critically, these clubs, largely composed of middle class housewives and mothers, endeavored to use ...their clubs as vehicles to influence the social progress of their homes, their cities, and the infant state of Oklahoma. Additionally, the national organization was influential in various efforts to promote the welfare of society, including compulsory school attendance laws, the Pure Food and Drug Act, legislation to promote maternal education, the Equal Rights Amendment, the Americans With Disabilities Act and the Family and Medical Leave Act, among a multitude of other activities. Generally, membership in the womens club movement peaked in the mid 1950s; however, many clubs, as well as the state and national organizations, remain in existence to the present day.³

²Susan L. Allen, *Progressive Spirit: The Oklahoma and Indian Territory Federation of Womens Clubs*, The Chronicles of Oklahoma, 66:1 (Spring 1988), 4-6. See also Chronology of GFWC History, About Us: General Federation of Womens Clubs, http://www.gfwc.org/about_us.jsp?pageId=20906118812251062016982136, accessed 19 August 2005.

³Allen, *Progressive Spirit*, 5-6 and *Chronology of GFWC History*. See also Linda D. Wilson, *Womens Club Movement*, Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture, <http://www.ok-history.mus.ok.us/enc/womensclubs.htm>, accessed 19 August 2005.

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In the 1890s, as the womens club movement was organizing and expanding, numerous communities in the future state of Oklahoma were making their appearance. The Olustee post office was established 27 February 1895 at a point about three miles west of the existing town. The name of the town came from a battle in the Florida-Seminole War with Olustee being a Seminole word meaning pond. In 1895, the Olustee area was part of Old Greer County, a section of now-southwest Oklahoma which was claimed by Texas cattleman in 1880. The federal government disputed this claim, maintaining Greer County was properly part of Indian Territory. Slowing but not halting development of the area, President Grover Cleveland issued a proclamation in 1884 warning people not to settle in the disputed county. Following the resolution of the controversy in favor of the U.S. government in 1896, Old Greer County was attached to Oklahoma Territory, formed from portions of Indian Territory in 1890. Long-time settlers in Old Greer County were allowed to file on 160 acres of occupied land and buy additional quarter sections at the price of one dollar per acre. In 1906, the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention divided Old Greer County into three whole counties, Jackson, Greer and Harmon, and a portion of another county, Beckham.⁴

Like numerous Oklahoma towns, Olustee owes much of its existence to the railroad. In 1901, C.G. Jones acquired the Northeast 1/4 of Section 20, Township 1 North, Range 21 West. He quickly platted this area into the new townsite of Olustee with the Oklahoma City and Southwestern Railway right-of-way extending diagonally through town. Jones, former mayor and noted entrepreneur of Oklahoma City, organized the Oklahoma City and Southwestern Railroad Company in 1900 with the purpose of connecting Oklahoma City to Quanah, Texas. This line extended southwest of Oklahoma City to Chickasha and Lawton before turning west towards Altus. At Altus, the line turned southwest again, to extend through Olustee and Eldorado. At the Oklahoma/Texas state line, the track took a south turn, ending in Quanah, Texas. Delayed until after the 1901 land opening of the Kiowa, Comanche and Apache lands to non-Native American settlement, the line was in operation between Oklahoma City and Lawton by August 1902. The track was complete into Quanah by mid-1903, critically providing Olustee with a major transportation means to larger markets primarily in Oklahoma but also with a Texas outlet. The Oklahoma City and Southwestern Railroad Company was subsequently acquired by the St. Louis

⁴George H. Shirk, Oklahoma Place Names 2nd ed. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 178. See also Cecil R. Chesser, A History of Jackson County (Altus, Oklahoma: Altus Printing Company, 1971), 24 and Arrell Morgan Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries, 2nd ed. (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 180-182.

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and San Francisco Railway (Frisco) which eventually merged with the Burlington Northern Railroad Company.⁵

With trains bringing land seekers to the community, Olustee flourished. In 1903, the town boasted two large stables, a wagon yard, three lumber yards, three physicians and a local newspaper. In 1907, the towns population reached over a thousand residents. At that time, Olustee had three churches, the Presbyterian, Methodist and Christian, with the Baptist congregation in the process of erecting a handsome new building. The school was a source of community pride as the ...best regulated public school in the new county. In addition to various other industries, the town claimed two gins, a sash and door factory, planing mill and a grain elevator and warehouse. The surrounding agricultural lands were also a prime attraction with abundant crops in cotton, corn, wheat, oats, broom corn, kaffir corn, milo, maize, alfalfa, fruit and garden truck of many varieties.⁶

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

In the spring of 1907, three female residents of Olustee began discussion of forming a club for the women of the burgeoning town. One of the three, Mrs. W.K. Barrett, had belonged to a club in Oklahoma City and ...was very enthusiastic about organizing a club... in Olustee. As a result, seventeen women gathered together on 20 April 1907 in the home of Mrs. Barrett and the New State Womens Club (NSC) was organized. With membership limited to twenty-five, the motto of the new organization was Step by Step We Gain the Heights and the colors were heliotrope and white.⁷

One of the initial activities of the NSC was to establish a library. First located in the house of the NSC President Mrs. Tom Moore, the library moved to the home of Mrs. C.A. Copeland before moving up town where it remained in various commercial establishments, including Mr. Holts dry-goods store and ...the old Bank Building..., until the 1930s. The NSC library was open to

⁵Grantor/Grantee Records and Plat, Available County Clerks Office, Jackson County Courthouse, Altus, Oklahoma, various dates. See also James L. Allhands, History of the Construction of the Frisco Railway Lines in Oklahoma, The Chronicles of Oklahoma 3:3 (September 1925), 236.

⁶Chesser, History of Jackson County, 25-27. See also The Daily Oklahoman, (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma), 3 March 1907.

⁷Smith, History, 1.

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the community at a subscription rate of \$1.00 per member for decades. The rules of the library were quickly codified, including a fine of 25 cents for books kept longer than two weeks and 50 cents charged to any member lending a library book. Various club members served as librarian, opening the library for two hours one afternoon a week. By the 1920s, the library was open from 3 oclock to 5 oclock on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons.⁸

The decision to start a library in Olustee was not without precedent. A public library was eminently compatible with the purpose of the womens clubs. Many clubs nationwide were formed specifically to create community book repositories. In all, by 1904, womens clubs across the nation had established 475 public libraries. On the eve of statehood, club women had successfully founded twenty public libraries in the Twin Territories, ten of which were also Carnegie Libraries. This included the libraries in Oklahoma City, Guthrie, Chickasha and El Reno. By the late 1930s, Oklahoma womens clubs succeeded in establishing seventy-seven libraries, as well as aided in securing funding for construction of a library at the University of Oklahoma. Nationwide in the early 1950s, four-fifths of the public libraries ...were originally the favorite project of some womans club.⁹

The NSC was federated in 1909. From that time forward, the club ...followed consistently the course of study outlined by the General Federation. In addition to a multitude of study topics, including travel, literature, music, politics, religion and health, the NSC quickly turned their attention to matters of civic improvement. Projects to better the community were encouraged by the GFWC and the state organization because they ...drew the attention of non-members and earned the communitys respect for the clubs as beneficial organizations. Civic improvement activities of the various clubs included beautifying and maintaining local cemeteries, establishing public

⁸The Altus (Oklahoma) Times-Democrat, 12 August 1936. See also Library Rules, located in Library Record Book and glued to many inside covers of books in the Olustee Public Library, 1909 and 1920 and various articles, NSC Scrapbooks, located in Olustee Public Library.

⁹Mildred White Wells, Unity in Diversity: The History of the General Federation of Womens Clubs (General Federation of Womens Clubs, 1953), 171. See also Allen, Progressive Spirit, 7 and Loretta Rainey, History of Oklahoma State Federation of Womens Clubs, (Guthrie, Oklahoma: Co-operative Publishing Company, 1939), 15.

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restrooms, distribution of flower seeds, planting of grass and trees and city-wide clean-up days.¹⁰

In February 1916, the NSC announced that the Civic Committee had determined to secure a park for Olustee. The park was to include ...plenty of shade and comfortable seats, and swings for the children. The probability of attaining the goal was believed to be high as knowing the tenaciousness of the leader and her committee members..., it was felt the park could be had ...for very little expense and a small amount of labor.... Although the Civic Committee ...failed to land the city park, as planned..., in 1916, the committee remained undefeated by the ...much dreaded enemy, lack of funds.¹¹

While the park idea languished for several years, the members of the NSC turned their attention to other important matters. In 1917, following the entry of the United States into the Great War, the ladies of the club planned ...to lay aside our usual programs and put in our time doing and financing the Red Cross work. Two years later, continuing ...the democratic spirit diffused by our boys in the training camps..., club members sought to sponsor community singings at the high school auditorium. Additionally, in cooperation with the Mayor of Olustee, the club planned a town wide clean-up day with plans made to clean all the alleys with the trash ...placed in receptacles ready for the garbage man.¹²

In 1920, the NSC again endeavored to create a community park in Olustee. The renewed interest in the park was likely influenced by the NSCs decision to initiate a Recreation Club for the young people of Olustee in January 1920. The purpose of this club was to promote and encourage ...sociability and wholesome amusements and outdoor recreation of various kinds. Later that year, the club voted to raise a fund in order to purchase land for a town park. Approved at the 15 September 1920 meeting, a pro rata of \$1.50 for each member present was to go the fund. By their next monthly executive meeting, the chairman of the Park Committee, Mrs. Moore, reported that lots for the park had

¹⁰Smith, History, 1. See also Allen, Progressive Spirit, 8.

¹¹The Olustee (Oklahoma) Democrat, 10 February 1916 and 18 May 1916.

¹²Ibid., 20 September 1917, 20 February 1919 and 13 March 1919.

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been paid for and committee members, including Mmes. McCaleb, Truscot, Edwards, Crow and Lightner, were discussing setting out of trees.¹³

Less than a month later, the NSC changed the name of the Park Committee to Civic Committee in order to give the committee ...a larger scope of work for their supervision. Shortly after this, the Mayor of Olustee, encouraged by the NSC, called a mass meeting to bring the park matter to the attention of the all residents. At the town meeting, the proposition for the park was unanimously approved with E.G. Walcott, C.W. Edwards and G.A. Lightner appointed to obtain the remaining lots in the block south of the lumber yard or identify other locations for the park. Notably, both Edwards and Lightner had female relatives already serving on the NSC Civic Committee.¹⁴

Fundraising efforts for the park continued for several years. In January 1921, the NSC held a box supper to raise funds to purchase trees for the park. The fundraiser was deemed a success with \$189.55 being raised. The following January, the NSC sponsored a picture show at the Victory Playhouse which raised just over \$30 for the park fund. By 1923, the town of Olustee owned all but one lot in the park block; this lot was acquired in 1925 through a tax sale. The NSC continued to actively promote and aid in the development of the park. On 11 November 1922, the NSC held a memorial program at the park with memorial trees being planted in the park for twelve local boys. In September 1925, club members promised to pay twenty-five cents each time their trees were watered. Four years later, the club as given \$9.73 by the local Chamber of Commerce to pay for much-needed sprinklers in the park.¹⁵

One of the most enduring amenities the NSC obtained for the park was the library building. As early as February 1921, the vision for the park included a library building. As described by Zala Drake in the local newspaper in 1921, After the trees and flowers are matured and the park made to look as if it

¹³Ibid., 22 January 1920, 28 October 1920 and 25 November 1920. See also Park and Library Notes, September 1920 - April 1924, (transcribed from the Minutes of the New State Womens Club by Jennie Buchanan in 2005, located in the Olustee Public Library, Olustee, Oklahoma), 15 September 1920 and 18 October 1920.

¹⁴Park and Library Notes, 1 November 1920 and 15 November 1920. See also Olustee Democrat, 25 November 1920.

¹⁵Olustee Democrat, 27 January 1921, 3 February 1921 and 19 January 1922. See also Park and Library Notes, 11 November 1922, 12 September 1925 and 2 December 1929.

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were a park, a small stone building could be built in the center and used for a public library. Fifteen years later, this vision, including the location and building material, became a reality in the Olustee town park through the unprecedented assistance of the federal government during a time of dire economic distress at the local, state and national levels.¹⁶

Despite increasing signs of a major recession throughout the 1920s, the Great Depression of the 1930s manifested itself largely with the 1929 Wall Street stock market crash. This nationwide 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.¹⁷

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.¹⁸

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 Oklahomas soil was lost to production. Furthering Oklahomas agriculture crisis were the large number of tenant farmers in the state. In 1930, sixty-two percent of Oklahoma farmers were tenant farmers, representing

¹⁶Ibid., 10 February 1921.

¹⁷Richard N. Current, etal, American History: A Survey, 2 vols. (New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 2:703-705.

¹⁸Ibid., 708.

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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.¹⁹

Agriculture, however, was not the only industry in the state greatly impacted by the depression. The oil market, another major economic force in Oklahoma, 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 relief to alleviate chronic unemployment and its results.²⁰

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 Works Progress Administration (WPA) originated in May 1935 when 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 1935 act authorized a new program of federal relief employment, building upon earlier New Deal programs such as the Civil Works Authority and the work program run by the

¹⁹Richard W. Fossey, Talking Dust Bowl Blues A Study of Oklahomas Cultural Identity During the Great Depression, The Chronicles of Oklahoma 55:1 (Spring 1977), 14, 22. See also W. David Baird, Final Report: WPA Structures Thematic Survey (Phase III), (Stillwater, Oklahoma: Oklahoma State University, 1987): 5.

²⁰Gibson, Oklahoma, 220. See also James Ware, The Sooner NRA: New Deal Recovery in Oklahoma, The Chronicles of Oklahoma 54:3 (Fall 1976), 341; and, Baird, Final Report, 5.

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Federal Emergency Relief Act. 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 provided by the wartime industries lessened the need for the WPA and the federal monies allocated to the WPA were required elsewhere.²¹

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 Jackson 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.²²

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 accounted 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, municipal and school auditoriums, highways and streets, parks, cemeteries, armories, schools and natural resource conservation facilities as a part of their engineering and construction projects.²³

²¹ Final Report on the WPA Program, 1934-1943 (Washington, D.C.:U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), 7.

²² Ibid., 59-71.

²³ Ibid., 47-48, 50-52.

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In March 1936, two members of the NSC, Mrs. R. B. Bryant, Chairman of the Library Building Project, and Mrs. B.F. Smith, NSC president, made a trip to Hobart, Oklahoma, to discuss a project to construct a library building in Olustee with the regional WPA administrator. Shortly after this, the two ladies went to Oklahoma City to ...confer with W.P.A. State Administrator in regard to the club library project. Within days, Mrs. Smith ...received a long distance telephone call which informed her that State W.P.A. headquarters had allocated the sum of \$3089 for the Building of the Olustee Public Library.²⁴

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. This precluded the NSC from being the direct project sponsor for the Olustee Public Library. The project sponsor, which for the Olustee Public Library was the town of Olustee, typically 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 project if the WPA was unable to and maintained and operated the finished project. Ownership of the project belonged to the sponsor upon completion.²⁵

The Olustee Public Library project proceeded quickly. Just weeks after the project was approved, O.B. Fultz of Mangum was appointed the project superintendent. In mid-April 1936, nineteen men from Olustee were already hard at work quarrying stone for the library from the Jim Long place, a site west of Olustee. The newspaper also noted that Olustee men only are to be employed in the construction of the building, unless special labor is required. Interestingly, the total cost of the project had not been determined at that

²⁴Minutes of the NSC, (Located in the Olustee Public Library, Olustee, Oklahoma), 2 March 1936 and 13 March 1936. See also The Altus (Oklahoma) Times-Democrat, 30 March 1936.

²⁵Questions 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.

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point. Both area newspapers reported that the federal allotment for the project was \$3,089 with the towns share of the project costs unknown.²⁶ By the end of May 1936, work on the native stone library building was progressing nicely with twenty-three men being employed on the project. With the town councils contribution of \$582.82 towards the project, the total cost of the library building was expected to be \$3,671.82. The ...public library and park improvement... project was only one of several WPA projects in Olustee and Jackson County. At that time, thirty-three men were employed on a project sponsored by the Olustee school district to repair school buildings. The federal share of this project amounted to \$4,530 with the school districts portion coming in at \$1,733. Additionally, near Olustee, emergency bridge repairs cost the federal government \$2,133.04 and the county government \$758. Overall, in just a year into the WPA program, the federal government had expended \$247,948.71 in Jackson County with project sponsors spending an additional \$107,055.10 on various projects countywide. Combined, the projects provided employment to 621 Jackson County residents. This was the highest portion of relief expended in the WPAs Oklahoma District A, consisting of Jackson, Beckham, Custer, Dewey, Greer, Harmon, Kiowa, Roger Mills, Tillman and Washita counties.²⁷

The Olustee Public Library building was complete by mid-August 1936. Shortly before this, the NSC held an emergency meeting to discuss ...the matter of finishing the interior of the library building. Club members quickly made and approved a motion to pay a bill of \$8.08 for wiring in the building. Additionally, the club agreed to ...use their money for finishing the interior of the building... with the executive committee attending to the details. Finishing details apparently included purchasing material for curtains, curtain rods, light bulbs, fuses, paint, six chairs, a book shelf and an oil mop.²⁸

In addition to providing money for completing the building, the NSC also donated their library of 2,000 books and book cases to the new town library. The club, at the request of the town council, also was placed in charge of the now-free community library. In preparation of the new library, the club also used the assistance of six girls employed by the National Youth Administration

²⁶The Altus Times-Democrat, 14 April 1936. See also The Jackson County Chronicle, (Altus, Oklahoma), 17 April 1936.

²⁷Ibid., 22 May 1936.

²⁸Ibid., 12 August 1936. See also Minutes of the NSC, Call Meeting No Date and 25 August 1936 and Park and Library Notes, 8 August 1936.

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(NYA). Aimed at providing aid to young people, the NYA operated under the auspices of the WPA to provide employment to jobless youth, as well as set up technical training programs. In July 1936, a total of 47 Jackson County youth were employed by the NYA. Besides aiding the NSC in book repairs and move preparations at Olustee, Jackson County NYA workers were employed at city halls, chamber of commerce offices, hospitals, schools and parks. The youth were paid thirty cents an hour with a maximum of thirty hours every month.²⁹

Following the opening of the library building in August 1936, the NSC continued to operate the library through the early 1990s when the club disbanded. By the early 1960s, the number of books in the library reached 4,600, more than doubling the number of books originally donated by the NSC. Throughout these years, the club maintained remarkable library records which presently remain in the closed library building. The club also maintained its involvement in the park, providing flower beds in the late 1930s and seemingly continuously planting trees in the park.

The Olustee Public Library and Park are nominated to the National Register for their association with the NSC. Although the library is an excellent example of the economic relief provided by the WPA and clearly an architectural gem of a building, the significance of the NSC's contribution to the betterment of life quality in Olustee through the development of the park, construction of the library building and operation of the Olustee Public Library, is paramount. By sponsoring the continued improvement of the park and library, the NSC provided the Olustee community with facilities they likely would not have had otherwise. The WPA required that their projects be a "permanent and useful addition to the community." Although not put in those terms, this was exactly the result of the NSC's efforts on these two projects. The club also expended much time and energy on other worthwhile projects which directly and indirectly improved the community, state and nation. Overall, the tangible efforts of the NSC to promote the welfare of society in the form of the library building and park are eminently worth of recognition for their historic significance to the community of Olustee.

²⁹Park and Library Notes, 8 August 1936. See also The Jackson County Chronicle, 31 July 1936.

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New State Womens Club Collection, including Library Record Book, NSC Scrapbooks, Club Minutes and Park and Library Notes (the Park and Library Notes are transcribed Club Minutes; transcription by Jennie Buchanan, 2005). Located in the Olustee Public Library, Olustee, Oklahoma.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

Lots 1-24, Block 33, Original Townsite of Olustee, Jackson County, Oklahoma.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The boundaries include the property historically associated with the Olustee Public Library and Park.