

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only  
received APR - 7 1982  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Lewis Ross/Cherokee Orphan Asylum Springhouse

and/or common The Blockhouse

**2. Location**

street & number Off OK 20

N/A not for publication

city, town Salina

vicinity of

state Oklahoma

code 40

county Mayes

code 97

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name State of Oklahoma - Department of Tourism and Recreation

street & number 500 Will Rogers - 2401 North Lincoln Blvd.

city, town Oklahoma City

vicinity of

state Oklahoma 73105

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of County Clerk

street & number Mayes County Courthouse

city, town Pryor

state Oklahoma 74361

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1982

federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Oklahoma Historical Society - State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Oklahoma City

state Oklahoma 73105

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>NA</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Lewis Ross/Cherokee Orphanage Springhouse, constructed in 1844, is an octagonally shaped structure built with native stone blocks. The roof has an octagonal base with gently pitched slopes rising to a peak and is constructed of wood shake-type shingles. The building is approximately 8' high and each of the eight sides is approximately 6' long. A gabled roof entryway extends approximately 4' from the north side and is supported by two log columns. An open-air entrance is located on the north side and two open-air windows are located on the west and east sides.

The original stone interior walls and shelving for storage of perishable food commodities is still intact (Photo No. 3). The original dirt floor has been concreted over and the original roof was replaced by the City of Salina approximately fifteen years ago, however, the integrity of the basic structure remains intact.

Shortly after 1903 when the Cherokee Orphanage was destroyed by fire, the City of Salina purchased the property and converted the open space around the Springhouse into a city park. Thereafter, it was used by community residents as a focal point for social gatherings such as the annual Fourth of July picnic and fireworks.

The spring over which the nominated property was constructed still flows and was used for many years as a source of cool water for those visiting the city park.

In 1971 the Department of Tourism and Recreation of the State of Oklahoma purchased the grounds where the Springhouse stands and it is now included in a specially designated recreation area supervised and managed by the state.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) (Ethnic)

**Specific dates** ca. 1844-1903

**Builder/Architect** Lewis Ross (Builder)

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Lewis Ross/Cherokee Orphan Asylum Spring House is significant for several reasons (1) constructed ca. 1844, it represents one of the oldest structures still intact associated with the settlement of Oklahoma approximately 70 years prior to statehood, (2) its historic association with Lewis Ross, pioneer Cherokee Indian, who developed one of the first salt works in Indian Territory and discovered the first non-commercial oil well in Oklahoma in 1859, (3) it was used by the Cherokee Nation Orphanage Asylum as a storage facility from 1872 to 1903, and (4) it represents one of the oldest forms of folk architecture in Oklahoma.

The nominated property is located in Salina which is considered to be the oldest white settlement in Oklahoma. Founded in 1796 by Major Jean Pierre Choteau, Salina became the center for the Choteau fur trading operations and home of August Choteau, the founder's son. Lewis Ross and his brother John, Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, acquired many of the Choteau land holdings in 1838. Lewis Ross constructed a three-story brick mansion and the Spring House in 1844. The Ross Spring House enclosed one of the springs used since the founding of the Choteau Trading Post in 1796.

Lewis Ross operated a salt works near Salina (name derived from French word for salt). In digging a well to increase the saline flow at one of his salt springs, Ross struck oil in 1859. His well flowed at ten barrels per day for one year until the gas pressure producing the free flow was dissipated.

The Cherokee Treaty of 1835 included a provision for the care of orphaned children. In 1871 the first such institution was established at the Cherokee Male Seminary in Tahlequah. At approximately the same time, the Lewis Ross Home in Salina was offered for sale to the Cherokee Council. In 1873 the Cherokee Nation purchased the Lewis Ross property and the Cherokee Orphanage Asylum moved to the Ross Home and used the Spring House for a water supply and storage facility for food. The Cherokee Orphanage Asylum remained there until 1903 when a fire destroyed the Ross Home, however, the Spring House was not damaged and remains the only structure still intact associated with the Ross Home and the Cherokee Orphanage.

The Spring House represents a form of folk architecture used throughout the limestone rock geology area of northeastern Oklahoma. Because limestone is water soluble, free flowing springs are prevalent. Early settlers enclosed these springs with small structures which were used as a type of refrigeration for perishable foods such as milk, butter, cream and eggs. The spring water retains a constant cool temperature throughout the year which makes the spring house an ideal storage facility for certain food commodities.

For a period of almost 140 years, the Lewis Ross/Cherokee Orphanage Asylum Spring House had stood on the same site serving those who have played a significant role in Oklahoma's historical development from the early years of Native American relocation to the present. It is one of the few structures left intact in Oklahoma which dates from the mid-nineteenth century settlement era.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Interview with Bill and Jan Hatfield, Salina Recreation Area Supervisors, Dec. 1982.  
Interview with Maureen Samuel, July, 1982.  
Ruth, Kent, Oklahoma Travel Handbook. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977,  
p. 201.

(continued)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Salina, OK

Quadrangle scale 7.5"

UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>6</u> <u>9</u> <u>5</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>0</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u> <u>2</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>	B					
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing		
C				D					
E				F					
G				H					

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Beginning at a point where the south and east boundaries of Block F, Graham Addition, Salina, Oklahoma intersect, proceed north 100' then to the west 150' then turn south and proceed 100' and then proceed east 150' to point of beginning.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Claudia Craig directed by Dr. George Carney

organization Northeast Oklahoma Counties Survey date January, 1983

street & number Oklahoma State University telephone 405-624-6250

city or town Stillwater state Oklahoma

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title C. M. Petrely date 3/18/83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Patrick Andrews

date 8/12/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 7 1983
DATE ENTERED	

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Wright, Muriel, George H. Shirk, and Kenny A. Franks, Mark of Heritage. Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 1976, p. 44.

Morris, John W. and Charles Goins, Historical Atlas of Oklahoma. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976, p. 36.

Gibson, Arrell M., Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries. Norman: Harlow Publishing Company, 1965, p. 274.