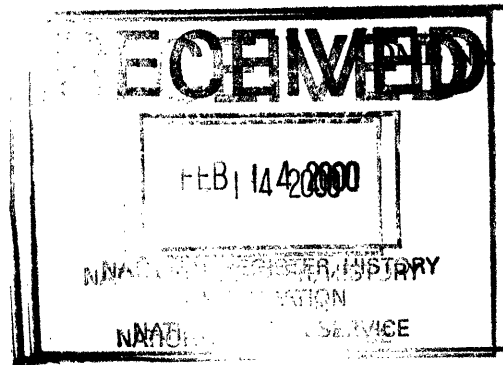


NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



1024-0018

1. Name of Property

historic name Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse

other names/site number Carl F. Albert Federal Building

2. Location

street & number Northeast Corner of the Intersection of 3rd and Carl Albert Parkway not for publication N/A
city or town McAlester vicinity N/A
state Oklahoma code OK county Pittsburg code 121 zip code 74501

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 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.)

Constance Werner Ramirez
Signature of certifying official

February 3, 2000
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Bob Schubert
Signature of commenting or other official

11-15-99
Date

Oklahoma Historical Society/SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other, (explain:)

[Signature]
Signature of Keeper
Edson H. Beall
Date of Action
3/24/00

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> buildings
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> sites
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 1 </u> objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 1 </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

 N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>GOVERNMENT</u>	Sub: <u>post office</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>courthouse</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>government office</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>GOVERNMENT</u>	Sub: <u>courthouse</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>government office</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.)

Classical Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation Stone:Limestone

roof Synthetics

walls Brick

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)

Politics/Government

Architecture

Period of Significance 1913-1949

8. Statement of Significance (Continued)

Significant Dates 1914

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Wenderoth, Oscar, Supervising Architect, U.S. Treasury Department
Lovell, W.D., Contractor

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 Less than One (1) Acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>247450</u>	<u>3868840</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

N/A See continuation sheet.

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cynthia Savage, Architectural Historian

organization Savage Consulting for Geo-Marine, Inc. (Plano, TX) date May 1999

street & number Route 1, Box 116 telephone (405) 459-6200

city or town Pocasset state Oklahoma 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 General Services Administration, Greater Southwest Region

street & number Fritz G. Lanham Federal Bldg., 819 Taylor St. (7PT) telephone (817) 978-4229

city or town Fort Worth state TX zip code 76102

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Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse
name of property
Pittsburg County, Oklahoma
county and state

Narrative Description:

SUMMARY

The Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in McAlester, Oklahoma, is a three-story, brick and limestone, Classical Revival style, public building with a full basement. Constructed between 1913 and 1914, the rectangular building has a flat, protected membrane roof and a one-story section on the rear. Built on a limestone veneer foundation, the first floor is brick with rows of recessed bricks which lend a rusticated look to the building at this level. A double limestone belt course separates the rusticated first floor from the smoothed wall second floor. Another belt course, this one unenriched limestone, is above the third floor windows. Around the top edge of the building is a limestone cornice with dentils. The façade also has a limestone parapet. The fenestration is symmetrical, in keeping with the Classical Revival style. All windows are nonhistoric, aluminum windows with four horizontal lights. The bottom light is operable. First floor windows are arched with large brick voussoirs, limestone ornamented keystones, wood frames, bracketed stone sills, and a paneled spandrel below. Second floor windows have an unbroken, flat arch limestone lintel and third floor windows have a flat brick header with a limestone keystone. The building's doors have also been replaced. The original wood panel doors are now glazed slab with aluminum frames. The entries retain their granite steps and cheek walls. In addition to the modifications to the doors and windows, the building has been changed by the enclosure and bricking of the original rear loading dock. In 1959, a new, brick loading dock was constructed on the east side of the building. The openings of this loading dock have since been infilled. In 1989, a three-story fire tower was built on the northeast corner of the building. Off the southwest corner of the building is a noncontributing monument honoring Carl Albert, a McAlester attorney who served a number of terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. The Federal Building is located in downtown McAlester on U.S. Highway 270. Downtown McAlester contains a substantial number of business and public buildings representing a variety of time periods and styles. To the immediate south, west, and north of the building are historic brick churches. Down the block to the west are the historic Pittsburg County Courthouse (National Register 1984) and Aldridge Hotel (National Register 1995). Despite the minor modifications, the building retains a high degree of integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in McAlester is a three-story, Classical Revival style building with a full basement. On the rear of the building is a one-story portion, which covers most of the north elevation. Originally, the

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one-story portion contained a wooden loading dock that was flanked by brick wings on both sides. The dock has been infilled with brick. The building has a limestone veneer base topped with brick walls. The first floor walls have bands of recessed bricks, which provide a rusticated look on that level, topped with a double limestone belt course. Above the belt course, the walls are smooth. Another limestone belt course encircles the building above the third floor windows. The building is topped with a bracketed cornice with dentils and, on the façade, a limestone parapet. The roof is flat and covered with a protected membrane. The windows are nonoriginal aluminum replacements with four horizontal lights. Windows on the first floor have wood infilling in the arched space, large brick voussoirs, ornamented limestone keystones, bracketed stone sills, and a paneled spandrel below. Flat arched limestone lintels top the second floor windows and flat brick headers with limestone keystones ornament the third floor windows. The entries are also aluminum replacements. On the south and west elevations, a small landscaped lawn is immediately adjacent to the building with a concrete sidewalk further out. On the southwest corner of the lawn is a noncontributing monument with a bust of Carl Albert, for whom the building was recently named. On the north and east elevations, an asphalt drive encircles the building.

The south elevation is the primary elevation. The façade is divided into three bays, with two narrow bays flanking a larger, central bay. Dominating the façade is the two-story loggia encompassing the second and third floors of the central bay. The loggia has four free-standing Composite Corinthian columns and two engaged Composite Corinthian columns on the corners. Connecting the columns are simple wrought iron railings. The loggia has a concrete floor with cement finish and a paneled stucco ceiling. On the north wall of the loggia are five French doors which open into the second floor courtroom. The doors are topped by eight-pane, operable casement windows that are capped by a two-pane transom. The doors and windows are set within a molded limestone surround, ornamented by a twisted rope motif. The doors are separated on either side by Corinthian pilasters. Above each door is a green-veined marble roundel with a molded denticulated outer ring ornamented by a series of glyphs. The east and west walls of the loggia are adorned with recessed panels with matching twisted rope ornament at the same height as the door surrounds and marble roundels. Below the loggia, the first floor features an arcaded porch extending the length of the central bay. The porch displays five arches with brick voussoirs and large, ornamented limestone keystones. Doric pilasters decorate the insides of the entry arches. Hanging in the center entry arch is an ornamental cast iron light. Between the remaining four arches are cast iron railings. The porch has a concrete floor and groin-vaulted stucco ceiling. Within the porch, the entry is centrally located. Aluminum framed double doors have replaced the original wood panel doors. Immediately in front of the entrance, a nonoriginal, projecting, enclosed entry has been constructed, which has double, glazed slab doors and glass walls with aluminum frame.

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This glass entry is only the width of the entry arch. For security reasons, this entry is no longer used. The arched windows in the porch have brick surrounds with limestone imposts. The nonhistoric aluminum windows sit within an arched wood frame with three horizontal lights and a fourth operable light at the bottom. The upper part of the arch has been filled in with wood. The windows have bracketed limestone sills with paneled spandrels. A flight of granite steps leads to the above-grade first floor. The steps have granite cheek walls and aluminum handrails in the middle. On the façade cheek walls sit two original, ornamented cast iron light standards. The light standards feature a lantern-type globe atop a scrolled cast iron shaft. The flanking bays are identical to each other. The first floor windows, matching the windows on the other elevations, are arched with replacement aluminum windows. The four-light windows have a bottom operable light. The upper portion of the arch has been filled in with wood. The windows have brick voussoirs and ornamented limestone keystones, matching the arches on the porch. Below the windows are limestone spandrels with brackets. East of the westernmost window are metal letters spelling "Carl Albert Federal Building." Below this are two metal shields. Above the first floor windows are two belt courses. Within the central bay, the upper belt course becomes part of the base for the loggia. The second floor windows have flat arched, limestone lintels on top and smooth limestone sills. These replacement windows have six horizontal lights with the bottom light being operable. The third floor windows have a flat, brick header with limestone keystones and limestone sills. The windows have four-lights, similar to the first floor windows. On the southwest corner of the building is a cornerstone. The cornerstone reads "William G. McAdoo/Secretary of the Treasury/Oscar Wenderoth/Supervising Architect/MCMXIII."

The west elevation fronts onto 3rd Street. Visible on the northern portion of the west elevation is the north elevation's western one-story wing. Excluding the one-story wing, the west elevation is divided into three bays. The two side bays flank a large, slightly protruding center bay. The rusticated look on the first floor is continued on this elevation with recessed rows of brick. Identical to the south elevation, this is topped by the double limestone belt courses between the first and second floors. Above the third floor windows is another limestone belt course, which gives way to the denticulated limestone cornice above. Barely visible on the west elevation roof is the elevator penthouse. The fenestration of the west elevation is symmetrical. The size and ornament of the windows match the windows on the south elevation except for narrow windows in the central bay. The flanking bays contain one window on each floor. Within the central bay, there are four openings per floor. Three of the four windows on both the second and third floors match the windows in the flanking bays. A fourth window, located in the northernmost portion of the central bay on all three floors, is a narrow, vertical, three-pane, fixed window. On the first floor, there are two windows and one entrance in the central bay.

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The entry matches the first floor windows with brick voussoirs and an ornamented limestone keystone. The doors are double, glazed slab with aluminum frames with a replacement transom. On either side of the door are original, cast iron, wall-mounted lights. Above the door is a nonhistoric metal awning. The above-grade door has granite steps which have scrolled cheek walls and scrolled cast iron railings on both sides. At the end of the yard, beginning just north of the entry, is a metal railing painted black. The railing wraps around the yard to create a handicap entrance on the extreme northern corner of the building. The handicap ramp leads to a metal pedestrian door set within the dropped, flat-roofed, brick area on the northwest corner of the original loading dock.

The north elevation is clearly the rear of the building. The rear is also divided into three bays and has a lower one-story projection. The denticulate limestone cornice and third-story belt course continue around the two narrow side bays. The windows in the second and third floors of the western bay match the windows of the south and west elevations. In the easternmost bay, the second and third floor windows have been changed to steel fire doors, which provide access to the 1989 brick fire tower. The original headers of the windows in the east bay, matching the west bay, remain in place. The limestone cornice with dentils and third-story belt course do not extend across the larger central bay. In the central bay, the four western windows on the second floor have six horizontal lights, matching the second floor windows on the other sides, and the four western windows on the third-story have four horizontal lights. The bottom lights on the second- and third-story windows are operable. The easternmost windows in the central bay do not match the other windows. Although the windows have the same number of lights, the lights are centrally divided. The decorative detail of the windows in the central bay is different from the other windows. The second floor windows are ornamented with a flat, brick header and a limestone keystone. The third-story windows have no decorative details. Between the second and third floor windows are recessed rectangular blocks. The one-story wings have the same arched windows as on the first floor of the other elevations. The walls of the wings also have a rusticated look created by rows of recessed bricks. Originally, the central part of the one-story section was a projected, wood loading dock. At some point, the loading dock was enclosed and clad with bricks.

Extending the full length of the one-story section is a limestone cornice with a parapet in the center. The openings on the west wing have been completely infilled, as has the window on the east wall of the east wing. On the south wall of the former loading dock there are triple, horizontal, four-light windows. Just in front of the south wall and projecting away from the east wall of the loading dock are stairs to the basement. Protecting the stairwell is a metal railing matching other railings on the north elevation. On the east wall of the former loading dock there is a horizontal, four-light window, which has no decorative detailing. A double entry is centrally located within the north wall. It has paneled, metal doors with a flat awning and metal railings. This entry is currently used as the main entry. A small, flat-roofed area is attached on the northwest corner. Located in front of the west wing's north window, it contains

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a single, metal pedestrian door with metal rails wrapping around the corner to the south. On top of the loading dock is a large mechanical unit, which partially blocks the view of the windows behind it. On the east corner of the north elevation is the three-story fire escape, added in 1989. The fire escape has two buff brick towers with steel fire stairs running between them. The towers rest on limestone bases. As previously described, there are fire doors located on the second and third floors.

The east elevation of the building faces onto a paved driveway and parking lot. This elevation is very similar to the west elevation, although there are no entries located within the original wall. Additionally, there is only one narrow, three-light window on the second floor, rather than one on all three floors as on the west elevation. The windows on the first, second, and third floors match the windows on the south and west elevations. Clearly visible on this elevation is the limestone veneer foundation of the building. On the other elevations, shrubbery obscures the foundation. Also visible is a brick chimney on the northeast corner of the building. The chimney has a limestone cap. In 1959, a new, one-story, brick loading dock was constructed on the north corner of the first floor east elevation. The dock has a flat roof, which extends over the south wall of the dock, and a concrete base. Originally, there were two overhead doors on the south side of the dock, a window on the east wall, and two overhead doors in the north wall. All of these openings have been infilled with brick. Additionally, the far west overhead door opening on the north wall has been obscured by the south tower of the 1989 fire tower. A glazed slab pedestrian door remains in the west corner of the dock's south wall.

Located in the southwest corner of the Federal Building's yard is a noncontributing monument to Carl Albert. Carl Albert, a McAlester attorney, served in the U.S. House of Representatives for 30 years, the last six as Speaker of the House. The monument was probably created in the mid-1980s when the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in McAlester was named the Carl Albert Federal Building. On the far southwest corner of the lawn is a flagpole.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The first floor of the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse has been significantly altered from the original post office space to tenant office space. In accomplishing the change in function, most of the original features and finishes on the first floor have been replaced. The original lobby ran from the main entry, on the south, to the secondary entry on the west. Although this configuration essentially remains, the main corridor now runs straight north-south from the current entry on the rear to the original front entry. Typical finishes on the first floor include vinyl tile floors in the corridor and carpeted floors in office spaces. Partition walls are generally covered with vinyl or painted or covered with laminated pre-finished paneling. Ceilings are dropped acoustical; these cover the original vaulted plaster ceiling. The former

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loading dock space on the rear has been divided into office space. One original feature remaining on the first floor is the wooden bulletin board at the west entry. The bulletin board displays historic photographs of the building construction in sequence, as well as some later photographs of the building.

The corridor of the second floor retains its original configuration. It opens off the stair/elevator lobby to the west and runs east to west across the building. Terrazzo floors have been covered with vinyl tile. Walls are painted plaster with a ten-inch wood base that has been painted black. The original plaster ceilings have been covered with dropped acoustical panels. Most of the original wood panel doors with transoms and wood surrounds remain, as do the wood panel double courtroom doors on the south side of the corridor. Tenant spaces are configured off the corridor in a U-shape around the courtroom. The tenant spaces retain their original configuration and a significant amount of original features and finishes. The majority of floors have been covered with carpet. The exception is the southeast judge's suite, which has been restored to wood plank. Walls in the tenant spaces are painted plaster and have a six-inch chair rail and ten-inch base. Original radiators remain in many of the offices. The radiators have been stripped of excessive paint to reveal the original scrolled relief motif. All restrooms on the second floor have original finishes. Floors are terrazzo with a gray marble border and coved base. Walls are clad to five feet with gray Tennessee marble. The stall partitions are also Tennessee marble and the stall doors are wood panel. An original shower stall with original exposed plumbing pipes remains in the southeast judge's suite. The other fixtures appear to be replacements.

Also on the second floor is the Federal Building's two-story courtroom. The courtroom is centrally located along the south side of the building. An unusual feature of the courtroom is the five sets of double French doors along the south wall, which open onto the two-story loggia. Across the room on the north wall are the double, vinyl-covered fire doors which provide access to the second floor corridor. The doors have a shouldered, wood surround with a scroll pediment above. Single doors at the northwest and southwest corners also have a shouldered surround. The original floor in the courtroom was wood plank. The wood floors were covered with cork tiles probably in the 1930s when this material became a popular courtroom feature. The cork tiles have been maintained in the jury box and at the main entry door. The remaining floor has been carpeted. The walls have a six-inch molded chair rail, and a ten-inch molded wood base. Below the chair rail, the walls are painted plaster. Above the chair rail glued-on acoustic tiles have been installed over the original plaster panels. This was done to deaden the sound from the adjacent highway. The original ceiling had a skylight in the center surrounded by decorative plaster panels. The skylight contained light yellow opalescent glass. The ceiling now has glued-on acoustical tiles above the crown mold. Lighting within the courtroom includes six schoolhouse-type globes suspended from the ceiling. The lights are not typical of courtroom fixtures and could be original to another part of the building. Furnishings include a paneled judge's bench and clerk's desk. The original benches were taken to the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Muskogee.

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The third floor corridor opens off the elevator lobby at the west end and runs from east to west outside the upper wall of the multi-story courtroom. The third floor corridor retains many original features and is very similar to the second floor corridor. All doors are original except for the northernmost door of the elevator lobby, which is a modern, flush wood door. The original doors are wood panel with an obscure-glass upper panel and obscure-glass transom. A short corridor to the fire escape exit has been cut-through at the northeast corner of the corridor. Off the corridor at the northeast and in a northwest office are two original restrooms. The restrooms have terrazzo floors with gray Tennessee marble borders. The walls are clad with gray Tennessee marble and painted plaster. The partition walls are also gray Tennessee marble. The original hardware is nickel-plated brass. The third floor tenant space is also similar to the second floor space, following the same U-shaped pattern. The floors have been carpeted. Some of the plaster walls have been painted while others are vinyl-covered. The original wood chair rail and base remain in most offices. However, dropped acoustical ceilings have obscured the original flat plaster ceilings.

The basement occupies excavated space which includes the northernmost two-thirds of the building. Primarily the basement is used for storage and service/mechanical areas. In the past, a few small offices were also located in the basement. The storage and service/mechanical areas have concrete floors and ceilings and painted brick walls. Office spaces have vinyl tile floors, painted plaster walls, and dropped acoustical ceilings. The office space flanks the small stair/elevator lobby at the west side of the basement. The lobby and short corridor extending to the east have painted concrete floors, painted plaster walls with a vinyl base, and dropped acoustical ceilings. The original carrier's restroom off the original swing room has been divided into two restrooms. Some original finishes remain. This includes the gray Tennessee marble wall panels to five feet and terrazzo floors with marble border. Some original hardware remains.

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS

While the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in McAlester retains a significant level of integrity, modifications have occurred. The original, wood, rear loading dock has been enclosed and bricked. In 1959, a second loading dock was constructed on the east elevation. At some point, the openings of this nonoriginal loading dock were completely infilled with brick. All of the original wood windows have been replaced with aluminum windows. The historic wood panel doors are now glazed slab with aluminum frames. These alterations appear to have taken place in 1966.

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A projecting, glass-and-aluminum entry has been constructed in front of the original entry on the south elevation. Additionally, the south entry is no longer used as the main entry. For security reasons and to provide handicap access, the main entry is now located on the north side of the building. Handicap accessible ramps have been located at this entry, as well as an entry on the northwest corner of the building. In 1989, a brick, two-story fire tower was constructed on the northeast corner of the building. The fire tower has steel fire stairs running between two buff brick towers. Access into the building from the fire stairs was created by replacing one window on both the second and third floors of the north elevation with a steel fire door.

Although the interior of the second and third floors retains much of its historic appearance, the first floor has been drastically modified. In the mid-1960s, when the U.S. Post Office moved out of the building, the first floor was turned into modern office space with dropped acoustical ceilings, fluorescent lights, vinyl tile floors, and partition walls covered with vinyl or painted or covered with laminated pre-finished paneling.

Despite these changes, the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in McAlester retains a high degree of integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The exterior modifications do not significantly impact the building's ability to convey its historic significance as a federal building, nor its architectural significance as an excellent example of a federally designed, Classical Revival style, public building. While the loss of historic fabric on the first floor is more significant, the high degree of integrity of the second and third floors, particularly the courtroom on the second floor, aptly allows the building to convey the historic uses of the building.

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Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse
name of property
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Narrative Statement of Significance:

SUMMARY

The Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in McAlester, Oklahoma, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the federal government at the local level and Criterion C as an excellent example of federal architecture from the early twentieth century. From the start of construction in 1913 to 1949, the building provided a federal presence in the town, as well as many federal services, including postal and legal. Although a number of historic buildings remain in downtown McAlester, the building is an outstanding example of a federally designed, Classical Revival style, government building.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1869, J.J. McAlester, formerly of Arkansas, settled at the crossroads of the California Trail and Texas Road and, with partner T.H. Hannaford, opened a tent store to serve wagon trains traversing the area. Within three years, McAlester bought out his partner and married Rebecca Burney, a Chickasaw Indian. Due to this marriage, McAlester became a citizen of the Choctaw Nation and, therefore, entitled to acquire title to land within the Choctaw Nation. In 1872, the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railway (MK&T) completed a line right by McAlester's store. Additionally, the MK&T constructed a station and ticket office near the McAlester store, naming the station "McAlister" which is how McAlester's family spelled the name. In 1885, the U.S. Post Office changed the spelling to the familiar "McAlester." Auspiciously located by the railroad, soon the community was thriving.¹

One of the major attractions of the developing town was the presence of coal. McAlester knew of the coal deposits when he first settled in the area. Although McAlester began mining the coal when he settled there, the first commercial coal mine opened in the area in 1875. Operating under the name Osage Coal & Mining Company in 1869, the mine quickly made a profit. However, a disagreement arose over the sale of the coal with the Choctaw tribe who felt the coal was part of their land. Coleman Cole, Chief of the Choctaw tribe, pronounced a death sentence on J.J. McAlester for the sale of Choctaw

¹ Pittsburg County Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc., Pittsburg County, Oklahoma: People and Places, (Wolfe City, Texas: Henington Industries, Inc., 1996), 517.

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property. This sentence was later dropped after an agreement was reached between the mining company and the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes. This agreement called for the mining company to pay a royalty to the tribes for coal that was mined.² In 1889, the Choctaw Coal and Railway Company completed a line connecting the rich coal field on the east to the Frisco line at Wister and on the west to the MK&T near McAlester. Due to a disagreement with J.J. McAlester over the right-of-way through McAlester, the new line was built 1½ miles south of the town. This new line resulted in the growth of a new town, South McAlester. In 1890, a post office was established at South McAlester. Development in South McAlester was quickly booming, while McAlester to the north did not fare as well. One of the major booms to South McAlester was the location of a federal court in the town in 1890. Due to the presence of the court, many lawyers located to the new settlement.³

In 1899, both McAlester and South McAlester incorporated: McAlester first, on 23 January, and South McAlester on 9 November. In addition to the booming coal industry, both towns benefited from a flourishing agricultural industry. Additionally, due to the excellent rail transportation system in place, food distribution also became a major industry. In September 1903, the Indian Territory Traction Company began operating a line linking McAlester to the South McAlester business district and to the residential areas to the south and east. In 1907, an act of Congress joined the two McAlesters into one city, named simply McAlester. Also in 1907, Oklahoma became a state and McAlester was named the county seat of Pittsburg County. The nearby town of Krebs protested the selection of McAlester as county seat of Pittsburg County. An election on 26 September 1908 settled the dispute with McAlester triumphing over Krebs.⁴

Coal underlies nearly 14,500 square miles of 19 counties in Eastern Oklahoma. The majority of coal is high-grade bituminous, ideal for generating steam. In 1898, 19 companies mined coal in Indian Territory. In 12 years, the number of companies had more than doubled to 53. Until 1920, coal reigned supreme in southeastern Oklahoma. Following this, the demand for coal decreased as railroads, a major coal consumer, began using oil rather than coal. The decline was temporarily halted during World War II when coal was again in great demand. By 1950, the coal industry was rapidly declining.⁵

² Ibid., 517.

³ Ibid., 517.

⁴ Ibid., 518-521.

⁵ Ibid., 521. See also Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey, "Historic Context and Predictive Model Document: Architectural/Historic Intensive Level Survey of Coal Mining Related Resources of Pittsburg County" (On file at the State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 1990), 11 and 45-46.

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During the heyday of coal mining in southeastern Oklahoma, McAlester reaped many of the benefits. At the turn of the century, the combined population of McAlester and South McAlester stood at 4,125, with McAlester boasting 646 residents and South McAlester having 3,479. By 1910, the population of McAlester stood at 11,774, with the city being firmly entrenched as the coal region's financial and commercial center. In 1910, another momentous economic event occurred for the town of McAlester, the opening of the state's main penitentiary. The state legislature designated McAlester as the site for the new prison in March 1909 with work beginning immediately, mostly with prison labor, on the new prison. The first prisoners occupied the new prison in 1910. The prison continues in operation to the present day. The 1910s were a prosperous time for McAlester. The coal mining industry was at its peak, the million dollar penitentiary was up and running, and crop production was up.⁶

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Twenty-one years after J.J. McAlester established his tent store, portions of western Indian Country opened to non-Native American settlement. This resulted in the creation of Indian Territory in the east and Oklahoma Territory in the west. In 1907, 17 years later, the combined territories officially entered the United States as the state of Oklahoma. In early 1908, while Congress was debating the passage of an omnibus public building bill that would appropriate at least \$20 million for U.S. courthouses and post offices, the Oklahoma delegation was seeking to get an appropriation for every large town in Oklahoma. Towns for which appropriations were sought included Oklahoma City, Muskogee, Enid, Ardmore, McAlester, Tulsa, Bartlesville, Lawton, Chickasha, Vinita, El Reno, Anadarko, Woodward, and Alva. The amounts sought varied from \$5,000,000 for Oklahoma City and Muskogee to \$50,000 for Anadarko, Woodward, and Alva. The Oklahoma delegation made such bold demands because they contended that both the Oklahoma and Indian territories had been neglected up to that point in the allocation of federal buildings.⁷

Prior to 1902, federal buildings were authorized on a building-by-building basis. Beginning in 1902, Congress began authorizing the construction of multiple federal buildings through omnibus acts. The omnibus public building acts saved considerable time in Congress because it allowed for authorization of a large body of projects in one vote. However, the increase in the number of authorized buildings during the early part of the twentieth century flooded the Supervising

⁶ Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey, "Survey of Coal Mining Related Resources," 49. See also Pittsburg County, Pittsburg County, Oklahoma, 521.

⁷ Muskogee (Oklahoma) Times Democrat, 6 March 1908.

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Architect's Office of the Treasury Department with new projects. The Supervising Architect's Office had charge of all federal building construction projects during the period. In 1899, this office managed or was in the process of constructing a total of 399 buildings. By 1912, the number of buildings rose to 1,126. Within four years, it was estimated that the number of federal buildings was increasing "at a rate of a new building every fourth day in the year." Additionally, the omnibus bills allowed for considerable political abuse. Political influence often dictated the size, ornamentation, and location of the buildings, rather than actual operational needs. Often viewed as federal "presents," the buildings confirmed to the town's residents the importance of their community and the power of their Congressional delegation.⁸

Although the federal buildings were often viewed as "pork" projects, they did serve the communities in which they were placed. In some communities, the buildings were also genuinely needed and deserved. In the five years prior to 1913, the post office receipts in McAlester nearly doubled to \$50,000 a year. As a depository for surplus money order funds for 120 offices, approximately \$650,000 was handled in 1912 in the different departments. Including railway mail clerks, the total payroll for the McAlester office equaled \$60,000 a year. In 1913, the McAlester Post Office was ranked fourth of the first class post offices in the state. This was a jump of two places from the previous year. Oklahoma City, Muskogee, and Tulsa were the only first class post offices ranked above McAlester. The only town that increased its postal receipts at a greater rate was Tulsa. Tulsa's accelerated growth was attributed to the great advances in oil and "the phenomenal stimulus it has given to the oil sections of the state."⁹

The contract for the new Federal Building in McAlester was let in May 1913 to W.D. Lovell of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The contract called for the building to be complete and ready for occupation by 15 October 1914. The cost was to be \$135,000 for just the building. Comprising three stories with a basement, the proposed building was to measure 80 feet by 80 feet. A driveway was to be constructed around the building. The first floor lobby was to be 55 feet long and 15 feet wide with terrazzo floors with marble border and bands, marble wainscoting, and plaster walls and ceiling. The building was to have hot and cold water on every floor. Also on every floor were to be toilets and lavatories. The plans called for a "special ventilation system" and for everything else to be "modern."

⁸ H.J. Kolva and Steve Franks, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Historic U.S. Post Offices in New Mexico, 1900-1940" (September 1988), E-5. See also Lois A. Craig and the Staff of the Federal Architecture Project, The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics and National Design (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1984), 213.

⁹ The McAlester (Oklahoma) News-Capital, 20 May 1913. See also The McAlester News-Capital, 21 July 1913.

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The May 1913 plans were actually the second set of plans for the building. The original plans had to be revised due to the inability to receive a bid within the appropriation. The first plan called for the first story to be stone which was eliminated in the second plan. Several other "gew-gaws" were also removed from the plans to allow the construction cost to meet the authorized amount.¹⁰

By July 1913, nine teams were employed removing dirt for the Federal Building's basement and foundation. About 120 loads of dirt a day were being carried away. It was estimated that the excavation work would be finished within six weeks and construction on the building would immediately proceed. However, inclement weather conditions delayed work until the end of September. Due to heavy rains "during the greater part of the month," the project was at a standstill. The necessary materials were also "slow coming in." By 29 September 1913, conditions had improved sufficiently to allow the laying of brickwork for the foundation to begin. Although the weather continued to hamper progress, by 24 December 1913 the foundation walls were complete, and much of the steel for the first-story walls was in place. Additionally, a contract was let to Henry H. Reemer to drill a 600-foot water well on the property.¹¹

Within a year, at a total cost of \$160,000, the building was complete. Immediate occupation of the building was delayed because the furnishings for the post office did not arrive. Postmaster Lester received permission to move the post office from its current location in the building owned by Melven Cornish anytime between the sixteenth and thirty-first of December. The post office moved on the night of 29 December 1914 and the next day transacted its first day of business in the building. William Noble, local "meteorological observer," was the first of many to do business in the building. The local newspaper noted "...judging from the continuous line of folks who visited the place, scores of people must have been doing without stamps and holding up letters to mail for several days in order to get a first chance at the new building." All the visitors to the building "expressed delight at being able to have their postal business transacted in such an attractive building." Government inspectors pronounced the building "as one of the most complete buildings of its class in the government service." Additionally, the building was judged "Perfect in finish throughout, commodious in every department, the best obtainable workmanship and high class material has made it a model combination of beauty and strength and it will undoubtedly be a source of pride to McAlester citizens for years to come."¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., 20 May 1913.

¹¹ Ibid., 29 September 1913 and 24 December 1913.

¹² Ibid., 29 December 1914 and 30 December 1914. See also The Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma), 3 January 1915.

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One of the major occupants of the building was the U.S. Post Office, which was allocated the entire first floor of the new Federal Building. The McAlister post office was established in 1873. In 1885, the official spelling of the name was changed to McAlester. The South McAlester post office was established on 5 February 1890. In 1907, the South McAlester post office was re-named simply "McAlester" and the old McAlester post office became the North McAlester station. As has been previously discussed, matching the rest of the town, the post office in McAlester was booming during the 1910s. In March 1913, a new station was opened in the South Main Street Drug Store. This station joined two other substations already operating in McAlester. In the new Federal Building, the post office quarters included the spacious lobby, workrooms for the various departments, windows and lock boxes, and an office for the postmaster in the southwest corner of the first floor.¹³

The other principal occupant of the new Federal Building was the federal court. Indian Territory first came under federal court jurisdiction in 1844 when the United States District Court, Western District of Arkansas at Fort Smith was given nominal jurisdiction over non-Native Americans in Indian Territory. Native American criminals were tried by Indian Tribal Courts, which had no jurisdiction over non-Native Americans. Lawlessness within Indian Territory, however, continued mostly unabated until the mid-1870s when Judge Isaac C. Parker came to Fort Smith. Judge Parker appointed 200 deputy marshals to roam the territory and bring non-Native American lawbreakers to Fort Smith to face judgment. The deputy marshals faced a daunting task as they patrolled over 74,000 square miles of Indian Territory. In 1883, Congress authorized the United States District Court of Kansas to extend its authority over the northern half of the western part of Indian Territory, while the United States District Court, Northern District of Texas was to assume jurisdiction for the southern half of the western part of Indian Territory. Two years later, the Major Crimes Act of 1885 further restricted the jurisdiction of the Indian Tribal Courts. This act required that Native Americans accused of certain crimes would be tried in federal courts rather than by Indian authorities. To facilitate implementation of the Major Crimes Act, Oklahoma's first federal court was established at Muskogee in 1889. The federal court at Muskogee had jurisdiction over all civil cases if at least \$100 and one U.S. citizen was involved and all criminal cases except those which carried a sentence of hard labor or death.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid., 16 February 1913 and 29 December 1914. See also George Shirk, Oklahoma Place Names (2nd Edition, Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 148.

¹⁴ Jeanette W. Ford, "Federal Law Comes to Indian Territory," The Chronicles of Oklahoma (58:4, Winter 1980-1981), 432-434.

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Another momentous event in Oklahoma history occurred in 1889 with the opening of the Unassigned Lands. When opened on 22 April 1889, the Unassigned Lands did not have any provisions for government. The Organic Act of 1890 provided the legal framework for government in the newly created Oklahoma Territory, which essentially covered the western half of the future state. The land of the Five Civilized Tribes in the eastern half of Oklahoma remained as Indian Territory. Muskogee continued as a federal court but now had jurisdiction only over the eastern portion of Oklahoma. A new court encompassing western Oklahoma was established at the territorial capital of Oklahoma Territory, Guthrie. Additionally, South McAlester and Ardmore were named as court towns in Indian Territory.¹⁵

Following the procedures used by the courts of Arkansas, the Indian Territorial Court system gave both civil and criminal jurisdiction to the federal government under the *Mansfield Digest*. In 1895, the Northern, Central, and Southern divisions of the Indian Territorial Court were organized, with court being held in each of the Indian nations. Court was held at the following locations: Northern District – Vinita, Miami, Tahlequah, and Muskogee; Central District – South McAlester, Atoka, Antlers, and Cameron; and Southern District – Ardmore, Purcell, Pauls Valley, Ryan, and Chickasha. Additionally, a Court of Appeals was established at McAlester with terms to be held in January and July. Three years later, the Curtis Act of 1898 abolished tribal courts and declared Indian law unenforceable in federal court. In 1904, the federal court system in Indian Territory was divided into four districts. The newly created Western District held court at Muskogee, Wagoner, Okmulgee, Sapulpa, and Wewoka. Court in Oklahoma Territory was largely the same throughout the period except that the Oklahoma Territorial Court used Nebraska State law as a guideline and it was never divided.¹⁶

In 1907 with the advent of statehood, the two Territorial Courts were replaced by United States District Courts. Interestingly, Oklahoma was the only state in the union that had two district courts from the time of statehood. Headquarters for the Eastern District Court was located at Muskogee and the Western District Court was situated in Guthrie until 1910. In 1910, Governor Haskell moved the state seal and papers to Oklahoma City, thereby designating it as the state capitol. Although court continued to be held in Guthrie, the headquarters of the Western District Court also moved to Oklahoma City. Court towns for the Eastern District included Muskogee, Vinita, Tulsa, McAlester, Ardmore, and Chickasha. In the Western District, federal court was held at Guthrie, Oklahoma City, Enid, Lawton, and Woodward. In 1924, the Northern District was created with headquarters at Tulsa.

¹⁵ Ibid., 434. See also Colonel Clarence B. Douglas, The History of Tulsa, Oklahoma: A City with a Personality (Chicago, Illinois: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1921), 64.

¹⁶ Ibid., 434-435. See also Douglas, The History of Tulsa, Oklahoma, 64.

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Court towns for the Northern District included Vinita, Pawhuska, Miami, and Bartlesville.¹⁷

Many of the cases that came before the federal courts in Oklahoma dealt with the same issues that district courts in other states were dealing with. Due to its unique history as Indian Country, however, Oklahoma federal courts also dealt with issues that were fairly peculiar to the state. Much of the work of the federal courts in Oklahoma during the first decades of the century had to do with two dominant forces in Oklahoma history: Native Americans and oil. In addition to abolishing the Indian Tribal Courts, the 1898 Curtis Act had harsh provisions for the disbursement of tribal land in Indian Territory and the dissolution of tribal governments. In order to ease the transition, the tribes entered into agreements with the federal government in which some land was retained under tribal ownership while the majority of land in Indian Territory was allotted to members of individual tribes. The remaining land, including townsites, was to be sold at auction. Due to the numerous legalities involved in this process, often not understood by the citizens of Indian Territory who were made wards of the federal government to protect them, there was much illegal and immoral activity related to the allotment process. A number of the early court cases dealt with Indian allotment issues, particularly in the Eastern District Court. Combined with the discovery of oil in the late nineteenth century, often on land held in trust for the thousands of Native American wards of the federal government, the allotment-related cases mushroomed.¹⁸

Prohibition was another major issue the Oklahoma federal courts dealt with from an early date. In the mid-1890s, a federal law was created which barred the shipment of liquor into areas occupied by Native Americans. In 1913, the Supreme Court held that this law was not repealed by the 1906 Enabling Act, which allowed for the creation of the state of Oklahoma. The Enabling Act stipulated that liquor was prohibited in Indian Territory and the Osage Nation for 21 years. The delegates of the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention subsequently extended prohibition to the entire state. However, federal law continued to apply in situations where the liquor was transported from outside the state, and federal officials enforced the law more frequently than the state government. Indicted by federal court for introducing liquor into Muskogee County, Bob Wright raised the point that he did not introduce liquor on land owned or occupied by Native Americans but rather into the town of Muskogee, the title of which had been relinquished by the Creek Nation. In 1913, the Supreme Court determined that the unrepealed 1896 law prohibited the introduction of liquor from outside Oklahoma into any Oklahoma counties occupied by Indians.

¹⁷ Ibid., 435. See also W.B. Richards, The Oklahoma Red Book (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: Secretary of State, 1912), 428-429 and William C. Kellough, "Power and Politics of the Oklahoma Federal Court," The Chronicles of Oklahoma (65:2, Summer 1987), 183-184, 191-192.

¹⁸ Kellough, "Power and Politics," 187-191.

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Because this issue dealt with the shipment of liquor into the state, state laws did not have jurisdiction. The local newspapers contained numerous references to people being indicted in federal court for liquor-related offenses.¹⁹

In addition to the U.S. District Court and the U.S. Post Office, other 1914 occupants of the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in McAlester included the deputy United States Marshall, district Indian Agent, Indian police, probate attorney's office, and a representative of the Bureau of Animal Industry.²⁰ In the late 1960s, the post office moved to a new location but the building continues in use as a federal court, as well as office space for various other federal agencies. In 1985, the building was renamed the "Carl F. Albert Federal Building and Courthouse" in honor of the 46th Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and local attorney.

Business at the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in McAlester was fairly routine, for Oklahoma at least. Nonetheless, the building is significant within McAlester for its association with these events because both represent the federal government in McAlester during the period. Often seemingly a remote entity, the federal government was made a tangible reality in McAlester through the construction and use of the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

As with all federal buildings constructed during the period, the Department of the Treasury in Washington, DC., was responsible for the design of the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in McAlester. As Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department, Oscar Wenderoth headed a group of architects in charge of building design for federally funded buildings nationwide. During the 1910s, the Supervising Architect's Office housed one of the largest architectural design offices in the United States. The team of professionals under Wenderoth's supervision included: L. Trviar, Architect, Supervisor of Drafting Division; Ernest C. Ruebsam, Structural Engineer, Supervisor of Structural Division; and N.S. Thompsone, Mechanical Engineer, Supervisor of Mechanical Division.²¹ During the early part of the twentieth century, Beaux-Arts Classicism returned to federal architecture the classical traditions that the eclectic styles of the Victorian period had disrupted.²² The Classical Revival style, a derivative of with the Beaux-Arts style, differed in its interpretation.

¹⁹ The McAlester (Oklahoma) News-Capital, 26 May 1913 and 6 July 1914.

²⁰ The Daily Oklahoman, 3 January 1915.

²¹ Larry Ummel and Cynthia Smelker, National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse in Chickasha, Oklahoma (on file at the State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: 1994), 20.

²² Craig, The Federal Presence, 214.

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One of the defining differences between the two styles is that the Classical Revival style employed less exuberant decorative detail while maintaining the classical order. The Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in McAlester is an excellent example of federally-designed Classical Revival style architecture. In addition to the two-story loggia dominating the façade, other Classical Revival features include the Corinthian columns and pilasters as well as the rusticated appearance of the first floor and symmetrical fenestration pattern. Furthermore, the overall building alludes to a classical order column. The rusticated first floor serves as the base; the second and third floors, the shaft; and the cornice as the capital. The double limestone belt course at the second floor separates the base from the shaft, and the single limestone belt course at the third floor separates the shaft from the capital.

The Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse served the McAlester community well from its construction in 1913 to 1949, the fifty-year mark of the National Register. The building is a physical representation of federal government policies and practices at the community level. It is also an excellent example of federally designed, Classical Revival style architecture in McAlester.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 7 and west 50 feet of Lot 8, Block 321, South McAlester.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries include the property historically associated with the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in McAlester.