

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Oklahoma</b>	
COUNTY: <b>Blaine</b>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Ferguson (Thompson Benton) House**

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**521 N. Weigel**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Watonga**

STATE <b>Oklahoma</b>	CODE <b>40</b>	COUNTY: <b>Blaine</b>	CODE <b>011</b>
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**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**State of Oklahoma**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**State Capitol**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Oklahoma City**

STATE: <b>Oklahoma</b>	CODE <b>40</b>
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**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
**Office of the County Clerk**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Blaine County Courthouse**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Watonga**

STATE: <b>Oklahoma</b>	CODE <b>40</b>
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**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**Ferguson House Special Survey**

DATE OF SURVEY:  
**1969**

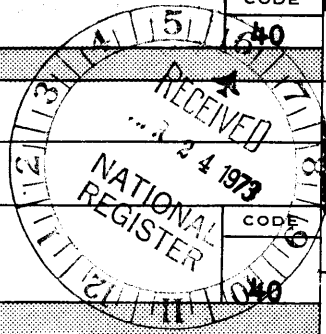
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
**Oklahoma State Parks Division**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**500 Will Rogers Building**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Oklahoma City**

STATE: <b>Oklahoma</b>	CODE <b>40</b>
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: **Oklahoma**

COUNTY: **Blaine**

ENTRY NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: **MAY 17 1973**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)  
 Excellent     Good     Fair     Deteriorated     Ruins     Unexposed

(Check One) Restored    (Check One)  
 Altered     Unaltered     Moved     Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Thompson Ferguson was appointed Territorial governor in November 1901. It was about this time -- late 1901 or early 1902 -- that he started construction on this three-story, ten-room frame house. He died in 1921 and Mrs. Ferguson continued to live in the house until her death in 1947. In the years that followed, however, it became a weather-beaten hulk, stripped of its cupola and gracious double gallery on the front. It was a run-down rooming house, ready for razing, when it was finally purchased by the Watonga Mothers' Self Culture Club in 1967. Ownership was transferred to the City of Watonga and then to the State of Oklahoma, which undertook the restoration.

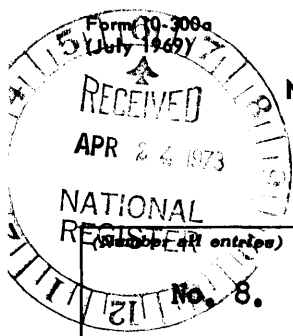
The house today, sitting comfortably on a quiet residential street, appears much as it did in 1902. A white picket fence guards the lawn. Elms throw their shade onto the balconied porches. Inside an attempt has been made to restore the original appearance. Furniture and furnishings -- while little of it ever belonged to the Fergusons -- are generally true to the period.

The first floor contains four rooms, plus the front entry way and an enclosed back porch. The second floor has an upstairs sitting room, four bedrooms and a bath. Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson used the sitting room as a work room for reading and writing. It was on this floor that Edna Ferber, spending three weeks with Mrs. Ferguson in the 1920s, started work on her book, "Cimarron." The bathroom contains the original fixtures. The third floor contained one large room and was used when needed as an extra guest bedroom. It is being used today to display historic items pertaining to the Fergusons and Blaine County.

On the rear of the Ferguson lot various other historic structures have been placed. They have no significance so far as the Fergusons are concerned, but are important to the area's history. Enclosed in an eight-foot stockade fence is Watonga's first city jail, built in 1893. Even older is a log cabin, erected about three miles to the west in 1870 as part of a modest U. S. Cavalry Remount Station.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Oklahoma	
COUNTY	
Blaine	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 17 1973

No. 8. Significance

Ferguson (Thompson Benton) House

It was this idealism -- and stubborn courage -- that led to his appointment as governor in 1901. As a territory, Oklahoma's chief executives were named by the president, almost invariably from the same party as the nation's chief executive, of course. But Theodore Roosevelt had strong ideas, too. Calling a delegation of Oklahoma citizens to the White House, he asked if there were not one honest man in the whole territory with the nerve and backbone to make a success of a difficult job on the frontier. One of those present suggested the red-headed western Oklahoma newspaper editor and Ferguson had the job.

The state as a whole was not sorry. He did a creditable job. He worked for herd laws in western Oklahoma to protect the newly arrived farmers from the free-roaming cattle of ranchers who had long considered this area their own vast preserve. And he got the laws through some 50 years before they were accepted, reluctantly, in parts of eastern Oklahoma. Again, well before it was popular elsewhere, he championed the cause of osteopathic doctors in Oklahoma, in the fact of bitter opposition from the medical doctors. Governor Ferguson also worked hard and effectively to improve Territorial schools and mental institutions.

Mrs. Ferguson, in addition to her church and civic activities, had always worked closely with the newspaper. And maintained her interest in politics. From 1921 to 1930 she ran the paper by herself. It was during this period that Edna Ferber came to Oklahoma looking for material for a book based on frontier life. For three weeks she lived in the Ferguson house. The work of a pioneer small-town weekly impressed her and she built her novel around such a paper as the Republican, using Mrs. Ferguson (it is generally believed) as her model for the book's Sabra Cravett. Later, after selling the paper, Mrs. Ferguson went to Hollywood to act as technical advisor in the filming of its movie adaptation. Her period of most active participation in politics followed and for four straight national Republican presidential conventions she served as delegate.

Both of the Fergusons were in many ways ahead of their time. They had vision as to what the newly opened territory should become. And they had the courage to work fearlessly toward the realization of that vision. They were both widely admired and respected, at the time and now in retrospect. They will be remembered as among the founders and shapers of the state. It would seem altogether fitting that, as a tribute to their lives, the modest house in a small western town where they lived out most of their adult years should be preserved. And recognized in the National Register of Historic Places.

## SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

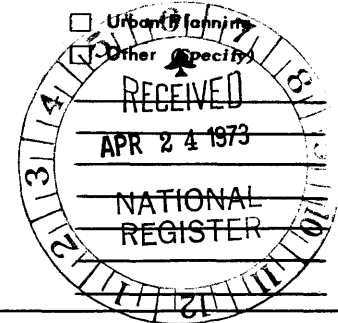
- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

1901 to 1947

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |                                                    |                                       |                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal                | <input type="checkbox"/> Education    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric               | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering  | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry     | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture               | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention    | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture              | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape    | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature   | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military     |                                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation              | <input type="checkbox"/> Music        |                                               |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Ferguson House for almost half a century was home to a remarkable frontier family ... a family that served honorably in at least two separate fields of endeavor ... a family that helped significantly to shape the course of development of its adopted territory and state. Thompson Benton Ferguson (1857-1921) made the run into Old Oklahoma in 1889, staked a claim near Oklahoma City, went back to Kansas where he went into the newspaper business, returned -- for good -- to Oklahoma in 1892, this time to Watonga, seat of Blaine County, only a few months after the former Cheyenne and Arapaho Indian Reservation had been opened to settlement. On October 12, 1892, he ran off the first edition of the Watonga Republican, which he operated until his death in 1921. From November 30, 1901, until November 15, 1905, he served as the sixth governor of Oklahoma Territory.

Elva Shartle Ferguson worked with her husband to publish the Republican, especially during his four-year term as governor, and she served as editor and publisher from his death until 1930. In the meantime she raised five children (one of whom, Walter Ferguson, became a well known newspaperman in his own right), worked actively in politics (she eventually served as delegate to four national Republican conventions, was the first woman to be chosen chairman of the state delegation), advised Hollywood on the filming of Edna Ferber's Cimarron, the main character of which she was the model. For these and other accomplishments in a long and active life she was named Oklahoma Mother of the Year in 1946, a year before she died.

Ferguson was a courageous, crusading editor. He felt a newspaper should take a stand on important issues, even when doing so might prove dangerous. In the first issue of the Republican (established in a modest two-story frame building erected originally as a hotel) he had outlined his beliefs and principles, swearing he would uphold them through his life as editor. A few months later he began a crusade against saloons that were violating the laws and harboring criminals. One cold night the office was set afire (according to the subsequent confession of a drifter, paid \$10 and a quart of whiskey by a saloon-keeper to burn out the young crusader). Ferguson and his family were lucky to escape with their lives. But it did not deter him from fighting for the principles he believed in.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Shaw, Helen, "Restoration of the T. B. Ferguson Home," A Booklet, Watonga, 1972.  
 Stein, Brenda, "Thompson Benton Ferguson, A Biography," Watonga Republican, Sept. 28, 1972, Sec. B-1  
 -- "Reguson Home to Become Museum," Kingfisher, Tel-Ectric Topics, June 1969

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

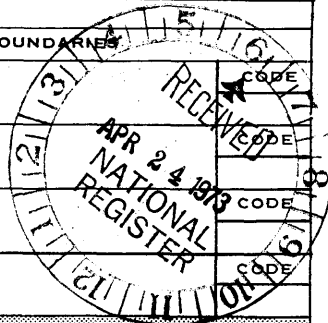
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
NW	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	
NE	0	0	35°	50'	56"	
SE	0	0	98°	25'	01"	
SW	0	0				

NO 51  
HL

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **c. 0.5 acre**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: **Kent Ruth, Deputy**

ORGANIZATION: **Oklahoma Historical Society** DATE: **February 1973**

STREET AND NUMBER: **Historical Building**

CITY OR TOWN: **Oklahoma City** STATE: **Oklahoma** CODE: **40**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

<p>As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name: <u>[Signature]</u></p> <p>Title: <u>SHO for Okla</u></p> <p>Date: <u>APR 17 1973</u></p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date: <u>5/17/73</u></p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p><u>[Signature]</u> Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date: <u>5-15-73</u></p>
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