

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

For NPS use only

received **AUG 16 1985**

date entered **SEP 26 1985**

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

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

**1. Name**

historic Wewoka Switch and Side Tracks

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number Oklahoma State Highway 56 N/A not for publication

city, town Wewoka N/A vicinity of

state Oklahoma code 40 county Seminole code 133

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Chicago Pacific Corporation

street & number 332 South Michigan Avenue

city, town Chicago N/A vicinity of state Illinois 60604

**5. Location of Legal Description**

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

street & number Seminole County Court House

city, town Wewoka state Oklahoma 74884

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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

The Wewoka Switch and Side Tracks consist of four switch stands and approximately .56 mile of tracks. There are two switch stands at the east end of the system and two at the west end (see diagram). The switch stands are approximately 10' high and are cast iron. Each switch stand has a lever on the side. The lever is flipped up or down. If flipped up, the lever throws the track so that an extra 2" piece of track at that point causes the flange on the wheel of the railroad car to flare out guiding the car off to the side track. If down, the railroad car remains on main track.

The side track system includes two main lines which run for approximately .56 mile. The two switches on either end of these tracks are tripped in order to divert one train in case two trains are heading in opposite directions. The "lay-bys" or "run-outs" (railroad terminology for side tracks) consist of two side tracks located on the northeast side of two main lines and one on the southeast side. Each of these three side tracks are approximately .25 mile in length. The two on the northeast side were used for freight loading and unloading and the one on southeast side terminates at depot and was used for passenger cars (see diagram).

The two main tracks are still used by Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad. With the decline of railroad usage, the side tracks are used infrequently, but remain in reasonably good condition because several box cars are still standing on them. The depot was destroyed by fire in the 1930s.

Various alterations have occurred over time in keeping with advanced technology and replacement of worn parts. In the late 1930s, an underground electrical system was installed to trigger the switch stands at either end of the tracks. In addition, railroad ties and track sections have been replaced over time. Other than these changes, the Wewoka Switch and Side Tracks has remained intact for more than 80 years.

### Contributing Properties

One (1) contributing structure

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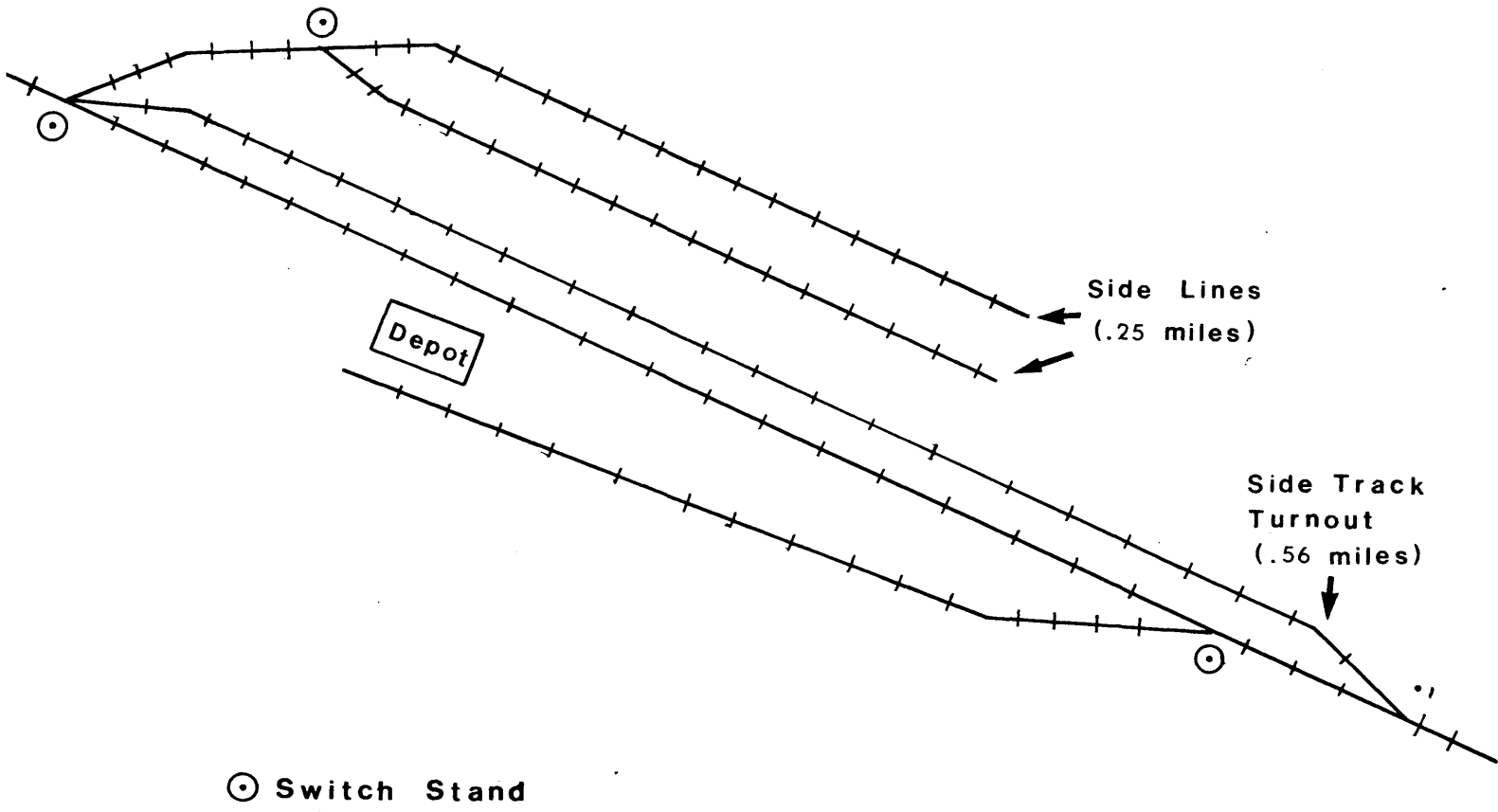
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Continuation sheet

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**WEWOKA SWITCH**



Not Drawn To Scale

# 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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1902-1930

**Builder/Architect** Chicago Rock Island and Pacific Railroad

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Wewoka Switch and Side Tracks are historically significant because: (1) during the pre-statehood railroad era in Indian Territory, it was the only side track between Oklahoma City and Little Rock, (2) following statehood after other side tracks were constructed at Shawnee, McAlester, and Ft. Smith, it was the longest system of side tracks between Oklahoma City and Little Rock, and (3) it prompted the folklore terms, "caught in the Wewoka Switch" and "lost in the Wewoka Switch", which became popular in the early 1900s and 1920s, respectively.

Wewoka became an important trading center in 1895-96 when the Choctaw Coal and Railway Company built a western extension of its tracks from McAlester to Wewoka. In 1902, the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railway Company purchased the Choctaw Railway Company and tied the Wewoka to McAlester line into their system which ran from Oklahoma City to Little Rock. At that time, the Rock Island built their first railroad side tracks in Wewoka, which were the only side tracks between Oklahoma City and Little Rock until side tracks were constructed on the Rock Island line at Shawnee, McAlester, and Ft. Smith within the next five years. Even though other side tracks were soon built, it has remained the longest side track system on the Rock Island route from Oklahoma City to Little Rock.

The first folklore term "caught in the Wewoka Switch" originated shortly after the Rock Island constructed the side tracks in Wewoka in 1902. Because of Wewoka's location on the Rock Island, merchants and traders from the surrounding small towns and Wewoka itself ordered supplies and merchandise to be shipped by rail to the new side tracks where they in turn drove in wagons to accept delivery of their orders.

Upon being questioned concerning any items which they had been unable to pick up from the side tracks, the merchant's standard reply was, "Yes, I have it but its caught in the Wewoka Switch." This meant that through some cause or another they could not supply the item desired and were caught in a tight spot. The expression "caught in the Wewoka Switch" has evolved to mean that one suddenly finds himself in an embarrassing or trying situation.

The second variation of the Wewoka Switch folklore originated during the 1920s when oil was discovered near Wewoka and it became a boom town overnight. Millions of dollars of oil field supplies, parts, pipe, casing, and even rotary drilling rigs began to flood the Wewoka side tracks. To compound the problem, freight bills were lost, telephone service was poor, and freighting facilities were lacking; all of which resulted in enumerable shipments of merchandise, thought to be lost in transit, being discovered in the Wewoka Switch side tracks months after arrival. So common did this situation become that the Rock Island Railroad adopted a policy of searching for all "lost in transit" shipments on the Wewoka Switch side tracks before looking elsewhere. During the 1920s oil field workers and petroleum executives who moved from the Wewoka Field to other oil fields in Oklahoma and elsewhere carried the expression "lost in the Wewoka Switch" to explain the lack of delivery of equipment.

The "Wewoka Switch" term has endured in Wewoka and remains a visible element of the cultural landscape. Local businesses still retain the name, e.g., the Wewoka Switch Motel, and local officials are planning to restore commercial buildings under the title, "The Wewoka Switch Redevelopment and Preservation Program."

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Personal Interview with Mr. Ken Webb, July 9, 1984  
Barking Water: History of Wewoka, p. 7  
The Wewoka Daily Times Revitalization Edition, June 28, 1984  
Chronicles of Oklahoma, Vol. 41 (1963), pp. 455-458

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Wewoka East, OK

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

East End Point  
A 

1	4	7	2	8	8	5	0	3	8	9	3	4	8	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

West End Point  
B 

1	4	7	2	8	3	5	5	3	8	9	3	6	7	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

C 


  
E 


  
G 


D 


  
F 


  
H 


Verbal boundary description and justification

(continuation sheet)

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Judy M. Hettich Directed by: Dr. George O. Carney

organization Department of Geography date February, 1985

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

city or town Stillwater state Oklahoma 74078

## 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 C. E. [Signature] date 7/30/85

title date

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

William B. Bushong date 9/26/85  
for Keeper of the National Register

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet Verbal Boundary

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Beginning at a point along the track 66' east of the intersection of the Chicago Rock Island and Pacific Railroad and Highway 56 through the north edge of Wewoka, proceed along the track and right of way to a point approximately 2940' (.56 mile) west of the point of beginning. Within this linear distance and the associated railroad right-of-way (132' at its widest) lies the Wewoka Railroad Switch lines.