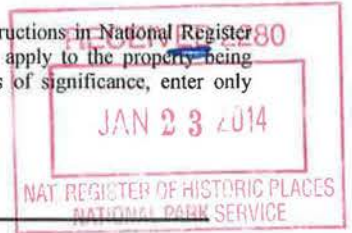


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Masonic Temple  
Other names/site number: N/A  
Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 121 S. Sixth Street  
City or town: Muskogee State: Oklahoma County: Muskogee  
Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets  
the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic  
Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria.  
I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following  
level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ X local  
Applicable National Register Criteria:  
X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

[Signature] 1/21/14  
Signature of certifying official/Title: Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official: Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Title: State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

*For Edson R. Beall*  
Signature of the Keeper

3-11-16  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL/meeting hall

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL/meeting hall

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th & EARLY 20th CENTURY REVIVALS/Classical Revival

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: \_\_STONE/limestone\_\_

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The 1925 Masonic Temple, at 121 S. Sixth St. in Muskogee, Oklahoma, sits in a mixed residential/commercial neighborhood not much changed from the original. The building is a two-story (over raised basement), detached, monumental, flat- and gable-roofed Classical Revival central block with wings. It is clad in gray limestone and has steel window and door units, primarily at the basement level. The most prominent features are a Classical portico on the east elevation, a detailed entablature, and a gabled, temple-like projection from the flat roof in the center of the building. The building's defining visual feature is its Classical symmetry. All materials are original, and the exterior, and most of the interior, are virtually pristine. With a high level of integrity and constant use since 1925 and until the Masons declared its declining utility in 1953, the building is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C, Architecture, and well as Criterion A, for Social History.

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## Narrative Description

The Masonic Temple of Muskogee, Oklahoma, located at 121 S. Sixth St., was constructed in 1924-25 as a detached, two-story building over raised basement. It is situated in a multi-use neighborhood (Lot 2, Block 165) just west of downtown Muskogee and one-half block south of the main street, Okmulgee Avenue. The temple faces east, with its long axis running roughly east-west along Boston Avenue. Immediately west is the Bedouin Shrine Building. In the early twentieth century the surrounding area was almost uniformly residential, but by the 1950s commercial enterprises and churches had acquired a number of lots north and east of the temple site, especially along Okmulgee, razed the houses, and built suitable structures. To the west and south the area remains residential.

The Masonic Temple presents as a monumental, parapeted, flat-roofed Classical Revival style building. It measures approximately 154 feet east-west by 133 feet north-south. In form, it appears in the front to be a central block with a slightly projecting center portico; the flanking wings are about half as wide as the center. This tripartite arrangement is used in each of the elevations.

The building is fireproof, with steel-reinforced concrete skeleton, brick walls and an exterior cladding of rectangular cut, (ashlar) smooth-finish Bedford limestone in regular courses (Masons take the perfectly cut and polished ashlar block as a symbol for the development of a man's mind and conscience as he moves through the Masonic levels and to become a Master Mason.<sup>1</sup>) Floors and roof are concrete. Part of the roof was originally tiled and was used for a short time as a roof garden for dances. The temple's general features include numerous steel-framed multi-light windows of various sizes, shallow, unglazed niches that mimic window openings, and steel doors. The main entry doors, on east and south, are steel units that have a narrow vertical window opening.

The most prominent Classical Revival features are decorated entablature and the colonnade, or portico. The portico comprises eight fluted Greek Doric columns. The entablature has a projecting cornice elaborated with shallow grooved dentils above a decorated frieze. The frieze has regularly spaced triglyphs, alternating under the dentils (Triglyphs are defined as shallow, vertical blocks that have two grooves in the center and half-grooves on the edges.<sup>2</sup>) See Fleming et al., *Dictionary of Architecture*, p. 326). At the top of the fascia, directly below each triglyph, is a narrow grooved block representing a plinth. The triglyph device is repeated under projecting window sills on the west side, which also has shallow, smooth square Classical piers with capitals and bases.

East (front) elevation:

The east wall, the primary elevation, shelters the main entrance. Its defining feature is classical symmetry. It has three parts: a central portico, and two wings. The building's dominant element is the central part of the east wall, with its projecting classical portico supported by eight fluted columns with no bases or plinths. Leading up from the street to the portico is a massive set of steps that extend along the width of the colonnade. The steps, which access the first-floor lobby on a mezzanine level, are divided into three parts by two original steel railings and are flanked by low stone walls. Flanking the steps, on a brief landing, are two fluted steel posts supporting glass globes. These fixtures are original.

Recessed five feet into the body of the building, the portico is also in three parts. In the center are three steel panel doors with elaborated surrounds. The outer part of the surround is a narrow band of billet molding (shallow, projecting cylinders placed regularly), a device repeated in each door panel. Each door has an architrave that includes a shallow, square column with cap and base at each side of the door unit;

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<sup>1</sup> See William D. Moore, *Masonic Temples: Freemasonry, Ritual Architecture, and Masculine Archetypes* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), 7.

<sup>2</sup> See Fleming et al., *Dictionary of Architecture* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1980), 326.

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the columns support a projecting header and, above, a two-window transom with eight triangular lights that radiate from the center. Into the walls on either side of the entry area are tall, narrow, rectangular niches, each with projecting cylinder at the top. There are three of these on each side, set as to be visible between the columns.

Above the entablature rises a low-angled pediment along the entire width of the colonnade, with a centrally placed Masonic symbol, flanked by the words "MASONIC [compass and square symbol] TEMPLE." Above this, and set back several feet from the parapet, the roof is elevated on eight-foot walls into a massive gabled structure that runs from the front to the rear of the building (over the auditorium). The gable end has a cornice that repeats the triglyphs, and on its north and south, along the building's long axis, the gabled roof has a slight eave overhang, also decorated with triglyphs.

Each of this elevation's side wings are plain, decorated only by a shallow, unglazed window niche set back into the stone. Each of these has a recessed fan molding at the top. In front of each niche sits a truncated, multi-sided engaged pillar (a typical Masonic symbolic device which, according to historian William D. Moore, represents "Jacin and Boaz. . . a physical representation of Solomon's temple."<sup>3</sup>

South elevation:

The Masonic Temple also has a second important elevation, the south side, along Boston Avenue, which gives access to the both levels. Here, a very wide central block projects out from the wall and is flanked by two narrow side wings. Essentially, this gives the south wall three bays, but all are different. The south elevation offers the building's only windows at the mezzanine level on the east end. There are six, each a tall, narrow steel unit with a 4x2 "transom" over 4x4 glazing. They sit between shallow Classical piers that rise all the way from the ground. The windows are set back in a shallow architrave. Two of them have small air conditioning units inserted at the top. The western section of the south elevation has the same number of piers at the mezzanine level, but there are no openings between the piers, just a shallow, unglazed niche set back in the architrave. In all three bays the windows have identical projecting sills supported by brackets that repeat the grooved Classical motif. Also arranged along the south elevation are twelve small basement-level openings, recessed well back into the stone, each in a pedimented architrave. These windows are two-light, with vertical mullions. The westernmost of them is a vent for the kitchen

The central bay has a set of steps that lead up from the street, turn at a 45 degree angle to parallel the wall, and finish at a metal-balustraded stoop accessing a second-floor entry, which sits in the exact center of the south wall. This entry accesses the library-lodge room area. Above the entry, the Masonic compass-and-square symbol is carved into the stone. On the stoop, an original fluted steel light post with a glass globe illuminates this entrance. Beneath the central steps is an entry to the basement, blocked by a steel gate; it also bears the Masonic symbol. This is the public entrance to the basement banquet room/kitchen.

In addition, the center section of the south wall has a low, wide pediment along the parapet, and the cornice/entablature treatment with triglyphs continues, all along this side. At the southwest corner of the building, a set of steps leads up to a platform along the west side of the building.

West (rear) elevation:

The west elevation is the "rear" of the building, and it lies along the alley. The wall is sheer from ground to the top of the gable. Here, the elevated gabled structure in the center of the building is much more evident, as opposed to the flat roof of the wings. A large chimney with a Greek key decoration projects upward from the top of the gable. The three sections are approximately equal in width, with the center gabled section bumped out several feet.

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<sup>3</sup> Moore, *Masonic Temples*, 140.

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There are only a few openings on the west side, most at basement level. In the projecting center block, near the top of the gable, are two vertical vents, and below, one tall, narrow two-vertical-light window lights a rear area on the second floor of the auditorium. Below that are four small, two-light windows for the basement. The north section has two coal chutes with iron doors and a small opening filled with a steel panel. The south section has a doorway under a pedimented label. The door is flanked by a small vent opening on the left and three two-light units on the right. This allows entry to the kitchen. Along this wall, a platform is raised to window level. It has steps up from the side street and has a metal railing, but it does not appear to have a function at present. It may have been used as a loading dock for the kitchen.

The cornice and decorated entablature extend around from the south side of the building across the south section of the rear elevation, but there is no similar cornice on the north wing. Also connected to the wall are three metal downspouts. Three air conditioning condensers sit on the ground outside the building.

North elevation:

The north elevation is plain and undecorated, as it would normally have faced a residence or business building on the adjacent lot. (The lot is now vacant and provides parking.) Here, too, a wide center section projects outward, and the side wings are very narrow. On this side of the building the cornice and entablature extend only across the eastern wing and is also visible below the overhang on the gabled section. The only other distinguishing feature of the north side is the horizontal row of fourteen openings at the basement level, below a narrow water table. The south section (toward the main entry) has two of these with 3x3 lights, in the center section there are six windows grouped on the east end and five grouped on the west end. Only the first four on the east end have 3x3 lights; the other eight are sealed with panels, as is the single window in the "rear" wing.

Otherwise, the north wall is plain and undecorated except for a cornerstone at the east end. Its sixteen-line inscription bears the words:

MASONIC TEMPLE//ERECTED BY THE//MASONIC BUILDING  
ASSOCIATION//MUSKOGEE, OKLAHOMA//BOARD OF TRUSTEES//W.G. GIBBONS,  
PRESIDENT//EARL BOHANNON#L.S.BAGLEY//W.B.BUTZ#J.A.LATHIM//H.H.  
OGDEN#A.J. CALHOUN//G.A. McBRIDE#G.E. PARKER//BASSHAM &  
HOWENSTINE//AND//JEWELL HICKS & W.T. MERICK//ASSOCIATED  
ARCHITECTS//DOUGHERTY-NICHOLS-WILSON CONSTRUCTION  
CO.//CONTRACTORS.

Oddly, the cornerstone bears no date, but it was laid in 1925.

Interior:

From the steps leading up from Sixth St. on the east side, one enters a large lobby that spans the width of the central block. The walls have marble wainscoting, and the floor is red and white tile. Above the wainscoting, very shallow engaged pilasters with simple capitals divide the wall into bays for doors and windows. From the ceiling hang original metal light fixtures. In the center of the west lobby wall are two sets of double doors leading to a large vestibule outside the main entrance to the auditorium. Between these, and facing the entry doors, is a ticket booth. Flanking the auditorium entryways are three arched openings for hallways leading to stairs to the balcony and down to the basement and to hallways accessing the private Masonic rooms. The offices area is also accessible from the lobby.

There are large interior rooms on the mezzanine, arranged along the long axis on either side of the theater/auditorium. They include, on the south side, a Lodge room (for meetings of the three resident Masonic lodges), a library, and an offices area, and on the north, a Knights Templar Commandery room and an Eastern Star room. Only the offices and library have windows. The offices are plain. The library is notable for its wall of built-in bookcases, a large fireplace, and paneled wainscoting.

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The three ceremonial rooms are similar in floor plan. They measure roughly 30 by 50 feet. Each has a balconette on the wall between the entry doors, opposite a wall with a low stage recessed in a niche deep enough to accommodate large chairs. The ceilings are approximately 19 feet in height. These rooms are windowless, according to Masonic tradition. They have elaborate and colorfully painted crown moldings. They also retain original pendant light fixtures and decorative vent covers. The lodge room, on the south side of the building, is the meeting place for three Blue Lodges. On the north side are a Commandery room (for the Knights Templar), and a slightly smaller Eastern Star room (for the women's group). The Commandery room is set apart from the other two meeting rooms by its arched ceiling and by its broad Tudor arch doors.

The auditorium, seating 1,200 and measuring roughly 60 by 120 feet, has the original seats with leather-cover cushions. It is approximately 40 feet in height, with a gentle slope downward toward the stage. It has seating on two levels, with a balcony that extends about a quarter of the way out over the ground-floor seats. The stage, on the west end, is elaborately bordered with moldings, painted in various colors. The proscenium is original, though in delicate condition due to age. There are anterooms beside the stage. At the rear of the balcony, entry doors flank a motion-picture projection booth. The balcony is entered via a vestibule from the stairs. Other smaller rooms are on the opposite side of the vestibule.

**Basement:**

The building has a full basement, divided into two functional areas. On the west and south end, it has a large commercial kitchen adjacent to a large banquet room that can seat 550. On the north and east are various storage rooms, mechanical rooms, a coal storage room with exterior chutes, and a large "robing" room with closets and lockers where Masonic ritual clothing and equipment was securely stored. In the area beneath the stage there are several small dressing rooms, some of which still have their "Hollywood style" strip lighting. A smaller area of the basement on the east side has an original vault and other rooms reserved for future use by youth groups. From the outside, the basement is accessed via a doorway under the stairs on the south side, which opens into the banquet room and allows the public to enter without having access to the ceremonial areas.

Various air conditioning condensers, one inside a chain-link fence, and a steel flagpole and marker, not original to the building, are not counted as noncontributing.

The Masonic Temple of Muskogee is in good condition and most assuredly retains the feeling and associations of its past uses. Original windows, doors, millwork, decorated moldings, and flooring exist throughout the building. Both interior and exterior are essentially unaltered from the original. Virtually all of the exterior materials are pristine except for the wear and tear of time. The Masonic Temple is therefore significant under Criterion C, as an excellent example of Classical Revival architectural style applied to a fraternal meeting hall in a medium-sized town.



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## 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 N/A

(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 grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1925-1952

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1925

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

ARCHITECTS: Bassham & Howenstine, Hicks & Emerick

BUILDER: Daugherty-Nichols-Wilson

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Masonic Temple of Muskogee, at 121 S. Sixth St. in a combined residential/commercial area, is being nominated for the National Register under Criteria A, for Social History, and C, for Architecture. The period of significance begins with construction and continues through 1952, the time at which the Masons themselves admitted its declining utility for social purposes. Muskogee's social history is entwined with that of the fraternal orders that bound businessmen and women together in social and public service. The first Masonic organization of 1888 participated in building the Masonic Temple in 1925. In addition, the building is the only pure example of Classical Revival in the city, though three others offer less elaborate examples or are combination styles in which the Classical dominates. With excellent integrity in all seven of the required areas, the Masonic Temple of Muskogee is well able to transmit the historical information necessary for listing.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Masonic Temple of Muskogee, at 121 S. Sixth St. is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A, Social History, as exemplary of Muskogee's community. It is meeting hall, for men, women, and youth, that provided a place for ritual and social interaction for a large group of citizens from its erection in 1925 until the present day.

Oklahoma's Freemasons have a long history that goes back much further than statehood. Fraternal organizations such as the Masons provided much-needed social bonding in a semi-frontier area where social group interaction and communication only slowly developed. In 1868 Rev. Joseph S. Murrow organized Oklahoma Lodge No. 1 of the Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons in Boggy Depot, Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory. Because lodges proliferated in the Indian Nations after that, in 1874 Grand Lodge of Indian Territory was organized in Atoka. After 1907 statehood, in 1909 the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma united the Masons of the eastern and western parts of the state. Fourteen years after the grand lodge formed, in 1888 The Grand Lodge of Indian Territory gave Muskogee Masons a charter for Muskogee Lodge No. 3, renumbered after the union of grand lodges as No. 28, as the union had to accommodate a situation of duplicate lodge numbers.<sup>4</sup> The Masons were a vital aspect of eastern Oklahoma's and Muskogee's social and business scene throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The fraternal organization experienced a rapid growth in the early 1920s. By 1925 time, 460 lodges operated in the state, and membership totaled 70,000, as estimated by Earl Fisher, Sr., Warden of the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma. In 1924 alone, the Ancient and Accepted Order of Freemasonry gained 4,963 members by initiation and 1,444 by affiliation in the Sooner State.<sup>5</sup>

The year 1925 was extremely important in the history of Masonic building projects in Oklahoma. By the end of that September, nearly \$10 million had been expended by Masons to construct new temples. According to a pictorial spread in the *Daily Oklahoman* (Oklahoma City), completions or starts on new temples had been effected in Perry, Ponca City, Muskogee, Tonkawa, Blackwell, Holdenville, Fairfax, Walters, Newkirk, Alva, Okmulgee, Stillwater, Bartlesville, Shidler, Wapanucka, Barnsdall, and Sapulpa, plus a new children's hospital in Cherokee. In addition, the Guthrie Masonic Temple was still under construction. The Bartlesville temple, a combination meeting hall and office building, was an astonishing

<sup>4</sup> Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons of Oklahoma, *History of Free Masonry in Oklahoma* (Muskogee: Muskogee Print Shop, 1935), 76, 112, 223-24; "History of Masonry in Muskogee, Oklahoma," [www.oklahomagenealogy.com](http://www.oklahomagenealogy.com), assessed 9 April 2013.

<sup>5</sup> *Daily Oklahoman*, 25 September 1925.

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twelve stories, and the new Ponca City temple-office building came in at \$325,000. Others also combined fraternal hall and office functions. The variety of architectural styles tended toward Commercial, but there were some significant Classical edifices in the mix, including Muskogee and Sapulpa.<sup>6</sup>

In 1919, the Masonic Building Association of Muskogee acquired a large lot in Block 165, at the corner of S. Sixth and Boston streets. On that site had once stood the house of Creek Chief Pleasant Porter (1847-1907), a Muskogee resident during his last eighteen years of life. His heirs sold the house in 1908.<sup>7</sup> In mid-1924 the Masonic Building Association of Muskogee engaged as "associated architects" the firms of Toy E. Bassham and L. L. Howenstine (of Muskogee) and Jewell Hicks and W. T. Emerick (of Oklahoma City). The architects presented their plans in December 1924. They envisioned a building of reinforced concrete and steel with Bedford stone cladding. The facility was proposed to have a 1,200-seat auditorium; a mezzanine; and three lodge rooms—one for three the Craft (Blue) Lodges, one for the Knights Templar, and one for the Eastern Star. The one-story-and basement design would have a nineteen-foot ceiling on the first floor, making it possible to build an additional floor around the auditorium.<sup>8</sup> The Masonic groups conducted a lengthy fundraising campaign to raise the money for construction.

Daugherty Nichols Wilson Construction Company was responsible for the project. Excavation began in early March, and despite unseasonable rains, on May 7, 1925, the Masons laid the cornerstone. (The inscription on the cornerstone, which lists the architects, builder, and board of the Masonic Building Association of Muskogee, lists the name of G. E. Parker. That would be Gabe E. Parker, a Choctaw and erstwhile federal superintendent of the Five Civilized Tribes, who had designed the Great Seal of the State of Oklahoma in 1907.<sup>9</sup>) Twenty huge four- to eight-foot-square footings of steel-reinforced concrete supported the structure.<sup>10</sup> Completed in less than a year at a cost of \$250,000, the building was formally opened on Saturday, December 26. In attendance were Henry S. Johnston (a Past Grand Master of Oklahoma Masons and soon to be elected governor of the state) and numerous other dignitaries.<sup>11</sup> The Masonic groups of Muskogee held a grand public opening on August 27, 1926, though finishing the interior details continued into 1928. The public marveled at the temple's hugeness as well as its ornate decorations.<sup>12</sup>

Thus the 1925 Muskogee Masonic Temple served one of the state's oldest lodges of the Ancient, Free and Accepted Freemasons: Muskogee Lodge No. 28) as well as Oriental Lodge No. 430 (chartered 1912), and Trinity Lodge (chartered 1921). York Rite Masonic bodies meeting in the building included the Muskogee Chapter of Royal Arch Masons (founded 1890); Muskogee Commandery No. 2 of Knights Templar (chartered 1892); and Muskogee Council No. 2, Royal and Select Masters (formed 1894). The building also served Muskogee Chapter No. 14, Order of the Eastern Star (1891), as well as Masonic youth organizations.<sup>13</sup> As noted earlier, by the mid-1920s, when Muskogee's Masons were building, Oklahoma boasted nearly 70,000 Masons.

When the Masons of Muskogee built their temple, they intended it to serve the social needs of Muskogee Masons and also to provide rental income from other groups. That is why the basement's kitchen and

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Contrary to popular understanding, Porter did not donate the land to the Masons, although he was a 32d or 33rd degree Mason. See Dianna Everett, "Pleasant Porter," *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, ed. Dianna Everett et al. (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 2009), 1206-07; Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Muskogee, Oklahoma, 1907, the U. S. Census of 1900, Muskogee, Oklahoma, Sheet 26, for Sixth Street (frame 51, www.ancestry.com), and the POLK CITY DIR??

<sup>8</sup> *Muskogee Daily Phoenix*, 29 December 1924. See Plans and Elevations, in possession of the Masonic Temple of Muskogee, examined by the nomination preparer, June 25, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Dianna Everett, "State Emblems," *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, 1422-23.

<sup>10</sup> *Muskogee Daily Phoenix*, 5 April and 3 May 1925.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 22 and 26 December 1925.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 26 August 1926; Ibid., 25 and 31 October 1928, 24 November 1928. See also Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Muskogee, Oklahoma, 1912/1951.

<sup>13</sup> R. L. Polk, *Directory of Muskogee, Oklahoma*, 1925-1963 (Var.: R. L. Polk and Company, var. dates).

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banquet area and the auditorium were designed on a large scale. The Masonic community of Muskogee, the town's citizenry, and statewide audiences benefited from access to the facility. It was viable even after the city built its own arena in the Municipal Building. The temple brought in revenue from rentals even into the 1950s.<sup>14</sup> Examples are numerous: Eastern Oklahoma DeMolay and the Oklahoma Assemblies of the International Order of Rainbow for Girls held their conventions there in 1928.<sup>15</sup> Other private organizations began using the auditorium for social, civic, and political activities in 1926. Even after the erection of the Municipal Building, with its arena-style seating for 3,000, the Masonic Temple continued to be a popular venue because of its theater-style seating for 1,200. Public events ranged from the crowning of the Queen of the Eastern Oklahoma Playground Association in 1927, to a children's marionette show, a four-concert series of recitals, and a political rally for Governor Henry S. Johnston in 1928. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen and the Northeastern Oklahoma Education Association held their annual state conventions there in 1928. When the venerable 1905 St. Paul's Methodist Church perished by fire in 1928, congregants met on Sundays in the Masonic Temple until a new church was ready. A Christian Science lecture took place in 1930, Better Business Convention lectures in 1932, and ladies' cooking schools in 1931 and 1932. Public social uses continued into the 1950s.<sup>16</sup>

The Masonic Temple of Muskogee is also eligible for the National Register under Criterion C, for Architecture. It offers a fairly sophisticated illustration of the Classical Revival style and a vocabulary of Masonic ritual as expressed in architecture. The building features many visual elements generically typical to Classical Revival style, including: Greek Doric—order fluted columns in a colonnade/portico; an elaborated entablature with a dentiled cornice and a frieze of triglyphs; square piers with caps and plinths; billet molding, elaborate architraves; pedimented parapets; and Ashlar limestone building blocks.

The building reflects a broad national trend in Masonic construction. Over time, many of the Masonic lodge buildings in the United States have followed general architectural designs that reflect both the building's purpose—a meeting hall—and the rituals embodied in the Masonic tradition. As noted in the Pond Creek Masonic building nomination in 2010 (NR 10000622), in Oklahoma some Masonic lodge groups (lodge is a word used interchangeably in reference to both the group and the building) used the upper floors of commercial buildings. Others over time erected a "freestanding building completely dedicated to Masonic uses."<sup>17</sup>

There is no "traditional architecture" for the exterior of Masonic temples. As noted by historian William Moore, over two centuries they have been various styles, including revivals such as Egyptian, Gothic, and whatever else was popular at the time.<sup>18</sup> Many Classical Revival Masonic buildings were erected around the United States in the early twentieth century. This trend is reflected in the Masonic Temple of Brooklyn, which, Moore notes, received "widespread attention in national architectural magazines and in the Masonic periodical press for its neoclassical design."<sup>19</sup> A 1909 issue of *Architecture* magazine noted that "the building expresses so completely the high purpose and aims of a great secret society like the Masons."<sup>20</sup>

In various communities around in Oklahoma in the early twentieth century, the style of a lodge building might be Commercial (Atoka, NR 80003251), Classical Revival (Guthrie, NR 87000503; McAlester, NR 80004521; Oklahoma City India Temple, NR 80003286; Sapulpa (not listed), or Modern Movement (Pond Creek, NR 10000622), or even a simple, prefabricated metal building. Like many of its peers and

<sup>14</sup> *The Muskogee Masonic Monthly*, 1 March 1942, 1 December 1949, 1 February 1952.

<sup>15</sup> *Muskogee Daily Phoenix*, 24 March 1928, 10 June 1928.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 and 22 January 22, 22 March, 27 July, 9 September, 14 October 1928; 27 January 1929; 19 January 1930, 14 May 1931, 10 May 1932.

<sup>17</sup> Bret Carter, "Pond Creek Masonic Lodge #125," National Register Nomination, State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma City, Section 8, page 6.

<sup>18</sup> William D. Moore, *Masonic Temples: Freemasonry, Ritual Architecture, and Masculine Archetypes* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), 139-40.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 134-35; *Architecture* magazine, quoted in Moore, p. 135.

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contemporaries of the early twentieth century, the Muskogee Masonic Temple was done in a revival style, one that appropriately reflects the Classical principles of symmetry and order, as befits an organization that acknowledges the Enlightenment concept of a "Grand Architect of the Universe."

As noted in William D. Moore's book on the symbolism of Masonic architecture, Freemasonry has historically embodied much of its symbolism and ritual in the exterior and interior of its meeting places. As noted earlier, Masons take the perfect Ashlar block as a symbol for the development of a man's mind and conscience as he moves through the Masonic levels and to become a Master Mason. Similarly, the truncated, multi-sided engaged pillars outside the main entry are a typical Masonic symbolic device that represents "Jacin and Boaz. . . a physical representation of Solomon's temple." Moore also notes that the Masonic buildings' exterior forms, which sheltering their interior ritual spaces, "buttress the organization's doctrines of intellectual and behavioral conduct. He also asserts that "Masonic organizations clad their structures in revivalist architectural styles to situate their symbolic actions within a mythic nontemporal realm." On the inside, the temple incorporated spaces that matched ritual purposes. The Commandery and the Armory of the Knights Templar (such as that in the upper floor and basement of the Muskogee temple) are exemplary and are particular to the York Rite orders. Similarly, the lodge rooms offered many visual symbols representing Solomon's temple and other Masonic concepts. Auditoriums served similar ritual purposes and sometimes also provided public meeting space for the non-Masonic community as well.<sup>21</sup>

Comparable Classical Revival Properties in Muskogee, Oklahoma:

A 1997-98 preservation survey of the downtown area identified Muskogee's Masonic Temple as one of four non-domestic examples of buildings designed with Classical Revival-style exteriors.<sup>22</sup> Each of these buildings is significantly different from the other but not all are pristine on the exterior. All were deemed National Register eligible.

Erected in 1913, the original Muskogee Public Library (401 E. Broadway St.), is a red brick building designated in the Oklahoma Landmarks Inventory as Classical Revival, but it has significant Beaux Arts details, including a swag-like pediment with shields and carved floral decorations over the main entry. The library is 2.5 stories and has a full-height entry of engaged Doric (rounded) pilasters. The door surround is limestone with a dentiled ogee pediment over the door. The limestone elaboration includes a broad cornice, belt courses, lintels, sills, inset panels, and other details. The building is not a pure example of Classical Revival.

The First Methodist/Trinity United Methodist Church, (518 E. Houston St.) is a 1911 two-and-a-half-story red brick cross-gabled building with a massive front pediment over a large, deep portico supported by round Ionic columns. Under the portico are doors with semicircular arched hood moldings. In the gable ends are Palladian-style windows. To the side of the portico is a two-story side wing with curved bay windows on each floor. The building also has a flat-roofed octagonal cupola that rises from the center of the gabled roof. These details are reminiscent of Colonial Revival. Thus the church combines two styles and is not a pure example of Classical Revival.

Muskogee Municipal Building (229-231 West Okmulgee Avenue ) is a combination Classical Revival and Modern Movement/Art Deco edifice built in 1925. The north elevation, or "office section" presents a red-brick "enframed block" with Deco-style up-stepped wings and decorative elements flanking a Classical Revival central section with a slightly recessed Classical portico over three main entrance doors. The west or "arena" elevation is almost entirely characterized by restrained Art Deco

<sup>21</sup> See William D. Moore, *Masonic Temples: Freemasonry, Ritual Architecture, and Masculine Archetypes* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), [in order of quotation], 7, 140, 120-21, 57-60, 34-35. Moore's Chapter 6 is devoted entirely to "An Order of Builders."

<sup>22</sup> Brad Bays et al., "Reconnaissance Level Survey of a Portion of Muskogee, Project No. 40-97-12040.013," Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office 1998, 47.

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ornamentation, though each of the main elevations has elements of both styles. The Municipal Building has retained excellent integrity in most aspects.

By comparison, these three buildings are considerably different from the Masonic Temple, though all fall into a same general architectural rubric of Classical Revival. The Masonic Temple, with its pristine integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, and association, is unique in its set of non-domestic comparable properties in Muskogee. In design and feeling, it is a "pure" example of the Classical, embodying ideals of simplicity, logic, and symmetry, and as such, it is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C, Architecture.

Additional Developmental Context:

Muskogee, Oklahoma, established in 1872 in the Creek Nation, has always been a center of population as well as government, economic, and transportation activities in Eastern Oklahoma. Early on, it was the seat of the administration of justice in the Indian Nations. By the time of statehood it was the second-largest town in Indian Territory. The town incorporated in 1898 and after that time maintained a formal city government. From a population of slightly more than 4,000 in 1900, oil booms and other fortunate economic occurrences raised it to a population of 32,000 by 1920 and by 1940, to 32,000. In the course of developing a vital and rapidly growing community, many Muskogee citizens took an interest in the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century trend of establishing men's social fraternities.<sup>23</sup> In the 1880s, at about the time that the Masons were organizing, so were the Knights of Pythias (1888). Others soon followed, including the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (1896, 1911, and 1913).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Wallace F. Waits, Jr., "Muskogee," *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, 995-96.

<sup>24</sup> Linda D. Wilson, "Fraternal Orders," *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, 546-47.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Bays, Brad, et al. "Reconnaissance Level Survey of a Portion of Muskogee, Project No. 40-97-12040.013." Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office. 1998.

*Daily Oklahoman*, 25 September 1925.

Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons of Oklahoma, *History of Free Masonry in Oklahoma* (Muskogee: Muskogee Print Shop, 1935).

"History of Masonry in Muskogee, Oklahoma" [www.oklahomagenealogy.com](http://www.oklahomagenealogy.com), assessed 9 April 2013.

*The Muskogee Masonic Monthly*, 1942, 1949, 1952. Files, Masonic Temple, Muskogee, Oklahoma.

Moore, William D. Moore. *Masonic Temples: Freemasonry, Ritual Architecture, and Masculine Archetypes*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006.

*Muskogee Daily Phoenix*. 1924-1931.

R. L. Polk and Co. *Directory of Muskogee, Oklahoma, 1925-1963*. Var.: R. L. Polk and Company, var. dates.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Muskogee, Oklahoma, 1912/1951.

Wilson, Linda D. "Fraternal Orders," *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*. Ed. Dianna Everett et al. Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Historical Society, 2009.

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### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

N/A

\_\_\_ 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_



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**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than one (1) acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 35.749744 Longitude: -95.376591

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property's boundaries include all of Lot 2, Block 165, Original Town of Muskogee, Oklahoma.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes all of the area included with the property's history as recorded in the Muskogee County Clerk's Office, Deed Records, Book 346, page 295.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Dianna Everett, Consultant to City of Muskogee Planning Office  
organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number: 2510 Countrywood Lane  
city or town: Edmond state: OK zip code: 73012  
e-mail weaver25@cox.net  
telephone: 405/348-4679  
date: 2 July 2013

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Masonic Temple

City or Vicinity: Muskogee

County: Muskogee State: Oklahoma

Photographer: Dianna Everett

Date Photographed: May 7-8, 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 5.

Photo 0001: East elevation, camera facing west

Photo 0002: East and south elevations, camera facing northwest

Photo 0003: South elevation, camera facing northeast

Photo 0004: West elevation, camera facing east

Photo 0005: North elevation, camera facing south

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Masonic Temple  
Muskogee, Muskogee County,  
Oklahoma  
Data Source: GoogleEarth  
Date Retrieved: May 1, 2013  
Date Copy: May 1, 2013

35.749744° -95.376591°

© 2013 Google

64

S 7th St

Boston Google Earth



MASONIC TEMPLE













UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Masonic Temple

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: OKLAHOMA, Muskogee

DATE RECEIVED: 1/23/14      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 2/24/14  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/11/14      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/11/14  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14000053

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT       RETURN       REJECT      3-11-14 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS: The signature block on page 2 of the nomination mistakenly gives 2016 as the date the property was entered in the National Register, it was entered on 3/11/2014

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



# Oklahoma Historical Society

Founded May 27, 1893

## State Historic Preservation Office

Oklahoma History Center • 800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive • Oklahoma City, OK 73105-7917  
(405) 521-6249 • Fax (405) 522-0816 • [www.okhistory.org/shpo/shpom.htm](http://www.okhistory.org/shpo/shpom.htm)

January 23, 2014

Ms. Carol Shull  
Acting Keeper of the Register  
National Park Service 2280, 8th floor  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, NW  
Washington D.C. 20005



Dear Ms. Shull:


We are pleased to transmit five National Register of Historic Places nominations for Oklahoma properties. The nominations are for the following properties:

- Logan Apartments, 720 West Boyd Street, Norman, Cleveland County
- Beattie's Prairie, Address Restricted, Delaware County
- First Methodist Episcopal Church, 518 East Houston Street, Muskogee, Muskogee County
- Masonic Temple, 121 South Sixth, Muskogee, Muskogee County
- Woodward Park and Gardens Historic District, 2101 South Peoria Avenue, Tulsa, Tulsa County
- Washington County Memorial Hospital, 412 Southeast Frank Phillips Boulevard, Bartlesville, Washington County

The member of the Historic Preservation Review Committee (state review board), professionally qualified in the fields of architecture was absent from the public meeting at which each of these nominations was considered and the recommendation to the State Historic Preservation Officer was formulated. However, the member possessing the requisite professional qualifications for evaluation of each nominated property was present and participated in the recommendation's formulation.

We look forward to the results of your review. If there may be any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either Lynda S. Ozan of my staff or myself.

Sincerely,

  
Melvena Heisch  
Deputy State Historic  
Preservation Officer

MKH:iso  
Enclosures

# CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION REPORT

Note: This report shall be completed for each nomination to the National Register of Historic Places submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office. Each item must be completed. The report form shall be attached to the complete National Register nomination. All comments received from the owner and others must also accompany the report.

1. Name of Nominated Property: Masonic Temple  
Location (Street Address): 121 S. Sixth Street  
City: Muskogee  
State: Oklahoma  
County: Muskogee

2. CLG Reporting: City of Muskogee  
Contact Person: Tish Callahan  
Title: Assistant City Planner  
Address: PO Box 1927  
Muskogee, OK 74402  
Telephone: 618-684-6232

3. a. Date CLG received the nomination(s): 10-2-2013  
b. Date Property Owner(s) notified: 10-15-2013  
c. Date of Public Hearing (if appropriate): 11-19-2013  
d. Date nomination considered  
by local review commission: 11-19-2013  
e. Date nomination submitted to SHPO: 12-9-2013

4. Recommendations of the CLG (check appropriate item):

The chief elected local official and the local review commission agree that the property is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

The chief elected local official and the local review commission agree that the property is not eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

The chief elected local official considers the property eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, but the local review commission disagrees.

The local review commission considers the property eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, but the chief elected local official disagrees.

5. Owner(s) Response (check appropriate item):

- ✓ The owner (majority of owners) consent to listing of the nominated property in the National Register of Historic Places.

The owner (majority of owners) object to listing of the nominated property in the National Register of Historic Places.

(Additional comments should appear in this area)

The owners consent to listing of the nominated property in the National Register of Historic Places.

6. Local Review Commission's Statement of Opinion:

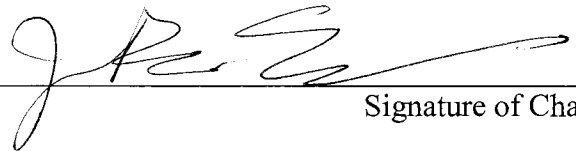
The Local Review Commission considers the property

✓ Eligible

Not Eligible

For nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for the following reasons:

The City of Muskogee Historic Preservation Commission considers the property to be eligible to the National Register of Historic Places due to its architectural significance of the Classical Revival style. It also is eligible due to its social history significance for its continued use since the construction in 1925 with a decline in use since 1952.



Signature of Chairman

Joel E. Pete Carson

Printed Name

12-9-2013

Date

6. Chief Elected Local Official's Statement of Opinion:

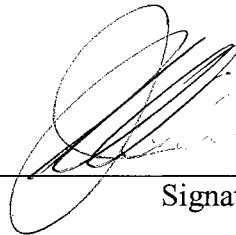
The Chief Elected Local Official considers the property

✓ Eligible

Not Eligible

For nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for the following reasons:

The City of Muskogee Historic Preservation Commission considers the property to be eligible to the National Register of Historic Places due to its architectural significance of the Classical Revival style. It also is eligible due to its social history significance for its continued use since the construction in 1925 with a decline in use since 1952.



Signature of Chief Elected Local Official

John Robert Coburn, Mayor

Printed Name

12-9-2013

Date