

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 24 1976
DATE ENTERED	NOV 3 1976

**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

** Fullerton Dam
AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

c. 7 m. NW of

CITY, TOWN

Olustee

STATE

Oklahoma

— VICINITY OF

CODE

40

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

No. 4

COUNTY

Jackson

CODE

065

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

—DISTRICT

—BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

—SITE

—OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

—PUBLIC

PRIVATE

—BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

—IN PROCESS

—BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

—OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

—WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

—YES: UNRESTRICTED

—NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

—COMMERCIAL

—EDUCATIONAL

—ENTERTAINMENT

—GOVERNMENT

—INDUSTRIAL

—MILITARY

—MUSEUM

—PARK

—PRIVATE RESIDENCE

—RELIGIOUS

—SCIENTIFIC

—TRANSPORTATION

—OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Joe Wheelles

STREET & NUMBER

Route 2

CITY, TOWN

Olustee (73560)

VICINITY OF

STATE

Oklahoma

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the County Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

Jackson County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Altus

STATE

Oklahoma

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Engineering Record (HAER)

DATE

1974

FEDERAL —STATE —COUNTY —LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Oklahoma Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Oklahoma City

STATE

Oklahoma

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Fullerton began work on his dam in the mid-1890s, at a point where Turkey Creek makes a sharp turn against a clay cliff. Opening up a nearby quarry, he hauled limestone blocks to the site for construction of his main dam. To the west he hauled dirt for an earthen dam with which to complete his reservoir. For the most part mules and the strong arms and backs of locally recruited laborers did the job.

When the reservoir was completed, Fullerton turned to creating the water distribution system. The first quarter mile of the main canal was the greatest challenge. Large amounts of rock and soil had to be moved. When finished, it was fifty feet wide, up to twenty feet in depth. At its peak the Fullerton Dam project irrigated as many as 1500 acres, some as far as five miles from the reservoir itself.

However, the flood of 1919 broke the dam. This allowed the heavy rock sections to settle and the new owners soon abandoned the project. The ruins remain today pretty much as they were then.

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 checked="" 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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1895 to 1919

BUILDER/ARCHITECT J. William Fullerton

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

To properly appreciate the significance of Fullerton Dam one should ideally have lived on the Southern Plains during the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s ... preferably as a farmer trying to wrest a living from the soil. With an average annual rainfall that is at best marginal, the farmer gambles constantly here that crops raised in above-normal years will tide him over during the inevitable dry years. During dry-year cycles such as the region suffered through in the '30s, the region can indeed become a dust bowl, the farmer a bankrupt refugee.

J. William Fullerton began farming in extreme southwestern Oklahoma in the early 1890s. He soon recognized the enormity of his gamble and his response was that of resourceful man from prehistoric times to the present: irrigation. What distinguishes his response is the scope of his project and its successful completion -- the first gravity flow irrigation system in Western Oklahoma* -- with a minimum of outside help.

Fullerton began modestly enough, irrigating only a small portion of his crops adjacent to Turkey Creek. But the success of this effort led him to plan ways to extend his operation. He opened a quarry near by, using the rock to divert more and more creek water to an increasing number of acres. And within a few years he felt confident enough to begin construction of a large dam. Using only mules and whatever largely unskilled labor he could find in the area, he built a rock dam across the creek and an earthen embankment to the west to create a large reservoir for the project. This completed, he began work on his canals. Tons of soil and rock were moved. A channel fifty feet wide and over twenty feet deep was cut. Lacking proper surveying instruments, he laid out the system with a home-made transit. And in time water was flowing from the damsite ... three miles eastward, another two miles southward.

Fullerton prospered the first years the system was in operation and he was able to borrow money easily for expansion. As production of wheat, hay, and sweet potatoes increased, he built a large potato house, then a bunkhouse for farmhands needed to work his 1500 acres. Underneath this bunkhouse he constructed a storage cellar, large enough that sweet potatoes could be hauled in by wagons from the fields, unloaded directly into storage bins for curing.

*At least by a non-Indian. There are indications in extreme northwestern Oklahoma of what appear to be the remains of a prehistoric reservoir and irrigation canals. (This site will also be nominated later.)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Chesser, Dean Cecil, Across the Lonely Years: The Story of Jackson County, Altus (Okla.) Printing Company, 1971, pp. 33-34
 Ellifritt, Duane S., Historic American Engineering Record: State of Oklahoma Inventory, Oklahoma State University, 1974

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY c. 3 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	4
---	---

4	5	5	0	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

3	8	3	1	2	9	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Kent Ruth, Deputy

ORGANIZATION

Oklahoma Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER

Historical Building

CITY OR TOWN

Oklahoma City

DATE

November 1975

TELEPHONE

405/884-5456

STATE

Oklahoma

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

[Signature]

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

[Signature]
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

11/9/96

ATTEST:

[Signature]

DATE

11-3-76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY FEB 24 1976 RECEIVED DATE ENTERED NOV 7 1976
--

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

Fullerton Dam

During these years Fullerton found a ready market for his products. Early-day newspaper accounts tell of the record size of some of his vegetables. The best of these he entered in the World's Fair at Chicago and other expositions. Soon he was traveling extensively to advertise southwestern Oklahoma. He had become something of an authority on irrigation. Meanwhile his reservoir had become a popular recreation area for fishing, boating, and picnicking.

Around 1905, however, the tide of success began to turn. Land development companies, noting Fullerton's initial successes, became interested in the project, offering to buy him out. But Fullerton refused. And in the end falling produce prices and increasing production costs combined to defeat him. He had to borrow heavily in 1907 and again in 1910. When he died in 1916 his entire operations were sold for a little more than a thousand dollars to satisfy debts against the estate.

New owners brought in an engineer. He recommended increasing the height of the dam to make possible the irrigation of more land. And this was done. But in 1919 a flood broke the dam. Discouraged, the owners never repaired it. The structure remains today much as it did nearly a half-century ago ... a still impressive monument to an early-day Oklahoma farmer of vision, courage, and perseverance.