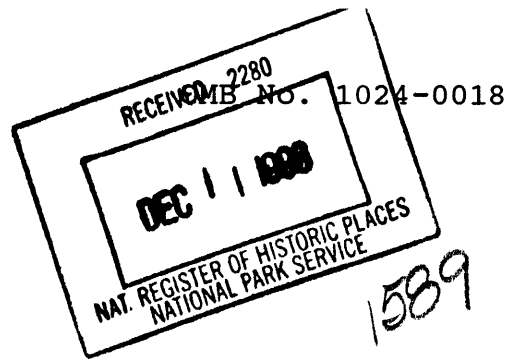


NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Okmulgee Armory

other names/site number Okmulgee National Guard Armory

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number NW corner, jct. 2nd and Alabama Sts. not for publication N/A
city or town Okmulgee vicinity N/A
state Oklahoma code 040 county Okmulgee code 111
zip code 74447

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this XX 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 XX meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X, locally. (N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official

23 November 1998
Date

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the
National Register

 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the
National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain): _____

[Signature]

1/25/99

Signature of Keeper

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

Number of Resources within Property

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DEFENSE Sub: arms storage

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: VACANT/NOT IN USE Sub: _____

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER--WPA Standardized Style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE--LIMESTONE

roof ASPHALT

walls STONE--LIMESTONE

other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====
8. Statement of Significance
=====

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ECONOMIC
MILITARY
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance 1935-1937

Significant Dates 1937

=====
10. Geographical Data
=====

Acreage of Property less than 1 (One) acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>230440</u>	<u>3946460</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	<u>N/A See continuation sheet.</u>					

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

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

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Dianna Everett, for the City of Okmulgee
organization Everett Research Services date 10 May 1997
street & number 2510 Countrywood Lane telephone 405-348-4272
city or town Edmond state OK zip code 73003-6433

=====
Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====
Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Board of Education, Okmulgee ISD #1
street & number 316 E. 8th telephone 918-756-4060
city or town Okmulgee state OK zip code 74447
=====

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Okmulgee Armory
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SUMMARY:

The Okmulgee Armory is a self-contained, horizontal, single-story building measuring 210 feet north-south by 147 feet east-west. A local project of the Works Progress Administration in Oklahoma, it was constructed in 1935-1936 of locally quarried native limestone. It sits in an area that was historically and currently a combination of commercial and residential. The armory is located on the northwest corner of the junction of 2nd and Alabama Streets, with the main entrance facing east. The floor plan of the Okmulgee Armory is typical of WPA-built armories in that it comprises three distinct sections: A central section, with barrel roof, contains the drill area, while flat-roofed wings on the north and south comprise offices, supply and arms rooms, and garage areas. The load-bearing limestone walls are an excellent example of WPA architecture and construction philosophy in Oklahoma. Though the massing is strongly horizontal, several architectural details give the building a vertical emphasis and suggest a vernacular Art Deco influence: stepped parapets over the entries; projecting pilasters at the building's corners, that rise into square-topped towers; and tall, vertical metal-frame windows (presently covered with metal plates on the exterior, but window frames are intact). All windows and doors are original. Alterations have been minimal: window glazing is uniformly missing, and the windows have been covered with metal sheathing. Despite these minimal changes, the Okmulgee Armory retains integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association sufficient to enable it to convey its past identity. It definitely embodies the distinctive characteristics of WPA construction methodology.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION:

The Okmulgee Armory, located on the northwest corner of the junction of 2nd and Alabama Streets, is a horizontal, self-contained, single-story stone building measuring approximately 210 feet north-to-south and 147 feet east-to-west. The Okmulgee facility was a two-unit armory. It has two wings attached to a central drill hall. The building's overall appearance is that of a fortress. As with most armories, the building is strongly horizontal in massing, the roofline indicating that the building is divided into three sections having different functions. The roofs of the north and south sections are flat. On the main elevations, above each pedestrian entry, the roof line is interrupted by a three-part frontispiece consisting of a stepped "false front" or parapet that towers over the entry and is supported by a pedimented pilaster on either side. The roof of the central section, or drill hall, is barrel-shaped, with the vault ends concealed by pediments rising above the north and south flat roofs. On the east side of the building the side of the vault is partially concealed by a stepped parapet rising over a central overhead vehicle door. The strongly horizontal roofline on the west has an upwardly projecting pediment in the drill hall section.

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As with many WPA armories in Oklahoma, the building is designed to have at least two principal elevations that each give pedestrian and/or vehicular access to a street. The Okmulgee Armory has three principal elevations, one accessing 2nd Street, on the south; one accessing Alabama Street, on the east; and one accessing a drill field area to the north of the building. Each of these three elevations is characterized by a centrally located, upwardly projecting stepped parapet and outwardly projecting piers that enframe window/door bays. The south elevation's main focus is an elaborate door surround consisting of a stepped parapet and tall, square-topped piers that enframe the portal. Shorter piers bolster the tall piers. The east wall is divided by heavy piers into three parts, the first being the south administrative/garage section, characterized by vehicle doors; the second being the drill hall, characterized by its barrel roof and pedestrian doors set in each of two heavy piers that flank a central vehicle door; and the third being the north administrative section, characterized by vehicle doors.

Stonework detailing is an important visual aspect of the building. Buff-colored limestone blocks set in irregular courses comprise the building's load-bearing masonry walls. These are an excellent example of WPA architecture and construction philosophy in Oklahoma. In the north, south, and east walls, the blocks are rock-faced, very rough, projecting from the wall at different depths, but on the entire west side the blocks are smoother. It appears that an attempt was made to course the blocks in this elevation, but the courses are wavy. On the other three sides the walls are simply decorated, the primary elaboration being narrow panels of smooth stone blocks set above each window and rising to the top of the parapet on the north, east, and south elevations. The door lintels and window sills are stone as well, but the stone is a dark color, contrasting with the buff color of the walls. The piers around the doors in the north and south wings have three recessed stonework "incisions" resembling ports through which weapons might be fired (the interior of each slit is smooth stone). The outer piers in the east wall have one incision each. Although the masonry technique is generally adequate around the building, the rough texture of the blocks and the less-than-precise stone cuts and mortar joints attest to the "amateur" or "trainee" status of the men on this particular project. By program mandate, WPA laborers were required to be unskilled in the work that they were called upon to perform.

Each elevation exhibits regular openings that indicate the multiple purposes of the building and the functions of interior spaces. Glazing patterns include combinations of two or three lights set in four, five, or six rows, usually with one or two rows being fixed into vertical center-pivot windows or into a bottom window that opens in hopper fashion. The SOUTH elevation has three bays. Central between heavy piers is the entry bay, with its original wood-panel double doors. Flanking the entry bay are two bays enframed by corner pilasters and the central piers; each bay contains a pair of 3x5 windows flanked by 2x5 windows. The NORTH elevation is identical to the

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south in fenestration.

Openings in the EAST elevation, in three sections, provide access and illumination for the south wing garage, central drill hall, and north wing garage. In the south section (administrative/garage) of the east elevation, the wall is penetrated by two original wood-panel overhead doors and a 3x5 window. In the central section (drill hall) there is one original wood-panel pedestrian door in the southeast corner pier; this door is topped by a 3x4 window. In the center is a wood-panel overhead door flanked by window sets; each set has two 2x6 windows flanking a 3x6 window. In the northeast corner pier is another original wood-panel pedestrian door topped by a 3x4 window. The north section of the east side is identical to the south and has a 3x5 window and two original wood-panel overhead doors.

In the WEST elevation the north and south administrative sections each have two 3x5 windows. In the central drill hall there are two 3x5 windows flanking four regularly spaced 3x4 windows. A ventilation window for the underground rifle range is visible at ground level. All windows have maintained the original steel casements specially designed for the WPA program's armories. All pedestrian doors and all vehicle doors are original.

Architectural detailing gives the Okmulgee Armory a vertical emphasis, lessening the strongly horizontal impact of the mass, and suggests an Art Deco influence. Indicative are the stepped parapets in the north, south, and east entry bays, the smooth stone panels rising above the windows of the north, south, and east elevations, merlons (raised portions of the pediment) rising from the strips between the east-side windows, and the single small merlon above each set of double vehicle doors. Each pedestrian door surround on the north and south elevations are marked by piers (full-height buttressed with half-height) having an outwardly and upwardly stepped conformation. On the east elevation, the central bay is stepped outward and upward from the rest of the wall, and the corners of the drill hall section are segmented in steps as well (rather than being straight 90 degree corners). The tall, steel window casings and frames are also typical of Art Deco or "modernistic" style, popular from the 1920s through the early 1940s. Rising above the roof between the drill hall and the south wing is an internal chimney, made of stone, with a crenelated top (this ventilates the fireplace in the drill hall). Original, vertical, ornamental metal downspouts still exist on the east and west elevations of the flat-roofed north and south sections.

Visible on the roof above the east entry bay is an original steel flagpole. In the east elevation, in the northeast pier of the drill hall, there is a smooth limestone cornerstone with the inscription "State Armory/Built by Works Progress Administration/1936/W. S. Key/State Administrator." Similarly, in the southeast pier of the drill hall is a smooth limestone cornerstone with the inscription "Sponsored By/Oklahoma National

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Guard/Gen. Chas. F. Barrett/Adjutant General/Capt. Elmer C. Croom/Commanding Troops." Above the overhead door of the drill hall there is a set of smooth granite blocks upon which inscriptions and an insignia have been carved and inpainted. The central image is a Plains Indian head, in profile facing south, wearing a full-feathered headdress. Below is an escutcheon (shield) bearing a crossed tomahawk and peace pipe. Below the shield is a scroll bearing the words "In Omni Paratus." Blocks on four sides of the shield bear the words "Armory" (above) "Oklahoma" (beside) "National" (beside) "Guard" (below). This logo arrangement is original, though possibly repainted at some point. In addition, above the parapet in the southeast corner of the drill hall section rise a second flagpole and a television antenna.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION:

The Okmulgee Armory is divided into three functional sections or wings. The south wing housed an infantry company, and the north wing housed battalion headquarters company. Both of these units used the centrally located drill hall. All interior walls are load-bearing and are constructed of stone. All interior doors are original wood-panel type. No interior remodeling has been attempted.

The 85-foot by 125-foot drill hall section was and is characterized by a very high vaulted ceiling with exposed steel roofing panels and exposed steel bowstring truss system. The drill hall retains its original pine wood-block floor, somewhat deteriorated in the corners because of roof leaks. In the west end of the room the original elevated stage opening has been enclosed with a concrete block wall having one door. The stage is now used for storage. The stage is flanked by pilasters like those found on the exterior, each with three "incisions." Other walls are also pilastered. Original dressing rooms are still accessible on each side of the stage. Under the stage, an underground rifle range has been permanently closed off (condemned), although steps and the original panel door still exist. Panel doors to backstage dressing rooms are also original. The drill hall's east wall has three exterior exits, one of which is an overhead vehicle door. In the drill hall's south wall, original wood-panel double doors open into the central hallway of the south wing, and in the north wall identical double doors access the north wing. The drill hall interior has two features not usually found in Oklahoma WPA armories: A secondary focus of the room is a massive stone fireplace set into the south wall. The sides of the firebox surround are straight, capped with a concrete mantel that extends slightly wider than the fireplace. The chimney front extends several inches out from the wall, and the bottom of the chimney is stepped upward. Another unusual interior feature in the drill hall consists of windows placed high up in the north and south walls, above the juncture of the drill hall roof with the north- and south-wing roofs. There are three 3x3 windows in the south wall and four 3x3 windows in the north wall.

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In the 60-foot by 111-foot north wing, occupied by Company K, rooms lie on either side of a central north-south hallway. At the south end of this hallway are original doors connecting the north wing with the drill hall. On the west side of the hallway are three rooms, an equipment room, which still has the original concrete arms vault (now without a door), a classroom, and the original shower room. On the east side are two offices flanking a single-vehicle garage. The walls are painted. No alterations have been made to the original floor plan.

In the 60-foot by 111-foot south wing, which housed the battalion headquarters unit, all rooms also lie on either side of a central north-south hallway. On the west side are three rooms. On the east side is the original garage flanked by two offices. No alterations have been made to the original floor plan.

Despite the loss of some window glazing and the covering of window openings with removable sheet metal panels, there are no other alterations. The Okmulgee Armory still retains the essential integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association to enable it to convey its past identity and its historical and architectural significance. It is an excellent embodiment of WPA-type military architecture in Oklahoma, and as such it is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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SUMMARY:

The Okmulgee Armory is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A within the economic context of Works Progress Administration projects in Okmulgee, Oklahoma, 1935-1937 and within the military context of national defense requirements of the Oklahoma National Guard's local unit in the era between the two world wars. It is also eligible under Criterion C within the architectural context of WPA building style and methodology locally and in Oklahoma. The armory was constructed between 1935 and 1937 by local men who were qualified for work relief under WPA guidelines. The project brought \$68,000 into the economy of Okmulgee, Oklahoma, by employing as many as four hundred previously unemployed, unskilled workers for more than thirteen months. The armory also filled a longstanding military need for an adequate, secure drill hall and arms-storage building for two units: Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, of the 179th Infantry, and Company K, 179th Infantry, of the 45th Infantry Division of the Oklahoma National Guard, which previously had no permanent armory. The Okmulgee Armory is also significant as an excellent, intact example of WPA architecture. The materials, limestone quarried within Okmulgee County, Oklahoma, and craftsmanship evident in masonry work, reflect both the goals of the WPA Building Program in Oklahoma and the practical considerations of using unskilled labor to construct large public buildings. As it is essentially intact, the Okmulgee Armory is able to convey appropriate feeling and association within these three contexts.

ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE:

Oklahoma suffered severely during the initial years of the Great Depression, 1929-1933. In a predominantly rural state, where in 1930, 65.7 percent of the population lived in rural areas, and twenty-seven of the state's seventy-seven counties had no towns of more than 2,500 persons, drought, general agricultural failure from 1932 through 1938, and a downturn in the petroleum industry exacerbated the general economic depression. Rural communities, towns, and cities, which functioned as agricultural or petroleum service centers, consequently foundered.

Oklahoma's state and local governments were unable to provide much help for citizens, whether urban or rural. Limited relief offered by counties did not alleviate the suffering, nor did meager annual relief appropriations by the state legislature. No public funding was available to maintain the existing infrastructure, and private charity failed to create or to support relief initiatives. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration, established in March 1933 by the Roosevelt administration, provided some direct relief, in terms of food, clothing, and stipends, and some state-controlled work relief programs,

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but until the inception of the Works Progress Administration in 1935 only a few Oklahomans received adequate assistance. The urban unemployed and displaced farm families combined to create a situation in which 33 percent of all Oklahoma families were on the direct relief rolls by the time that Roosevelt created the WPA by executive order in May 1935. By July 1935 there were 127,416 jobless men certified in Oklahoma.¹

The inauguration of the Works Progress Administration in 1935 stands as one of the benchmarks of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" for the United States. Administered on the national level by Harry Hopkins, the program was designed to assist in lifting the nation from the depths of severe economic depression. Make-work projects provided work-relief for literally millions of individual citizens whose lives had been devastated by the near-collapse of the American economy. The infusion of cash into work-relief projects all over the state made a significant economic impact on hundreds of communities. During the seven-and-one-half-year life of the WPA, more than \$10.75 billion were expended nationwide, of which Oklahoma received more than \$185 million for projects ranging from school lunch programs, flood control, and archeological excavations, to major construction projects such as armories, highways, bridges, schools, stadiums, and museums.²

Localities competed for WPA funds from the outset. Chambers of Commerce and planning committees drew up specifications to meet three major criteria established by the administration: 1) projects must meet a well-defined community need; 2) each project must be sponsored by a public body, such as a city or county government or school district, which was required to provide from 10 to 25 percent of the project cost in cash and/or materials; and 3) 90 percent of those hired must be unemployed, employable workers who were carried on the relief rolls. Compensation was to be based on 130 hours of work for \$21 (later \$23) per month for unskilled labor.³ In June 1935 Oklahoma WPA Director (Gen.) William S. Key estimated that there were already "70,000 employable unemployed" ready to work on his agency's projects throughout the state; by November of that year, 67,973 people were at work for the WPA, and by January 1936 WPA rolls reached an all-time high of 94,281.⁴

Armory construction was the first major thrust of the WPA Building Program in Oklahoma. Approved as a nationwide project in September 1935, through the efforts of Oklahoma's Gen. William S. Key, the armory-building program began in earnest in the last two months of 1935. By mid-1937, 126 armories had been constructed throughout the United States, and 51 of these projects were located in Oklahoma. When the WPA ended its program in 1943, 54 armories had been built and 53 others "reconstructed" in the state. The new construction had infused \$3.5 million into local economies.⁵

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Okmulgee County received many benefits from the WPA. A predominantly rural area, the county had once been part of the Creek Nation. The city of Okmulgee served as the capital of the Creek Nation from 1869 until the turn-of-the-century dissolution of tribal government. Agriculture--mostly cotton farming--became an important economic activity. Okmulgee became a prominent service center for the predominantly agricultural and ranching region.

An oil boom beginning in 1907 brought prosperity to the city and county of Okmulgee, and by 1930 the city of Okmulgee had grown into a community of 18,040. Oil production, equipment manufacturing, and processing/refining became a staple of the economy. In 1920 the county produced one-sixth of all the oil produced in Oklahoma, and the town became known as "the hub of industrial Oklahoma."

Depressed oil and agriculture prices in the 1920s and drought in the early 1930s caused an economic decline in Okmulgee County, as elsewhere. Various manufacturing plants also closed down, and unemployment grew.⁶ In an effort at private aid, Mayor D. C. Kennan led local citizens in setting up a "One Per-Cent Club" in which financially sound Okmulgees donated 1 percent of their pay to a fund to aid local families; at one time 150 families benefitted. Private efforts, sadly, were not enough to stop the trend toward joblessness and homelessness in the wake of a major national depression. By September 1934, 4,006 families, comprising 29.7 percent of the county population, were on direct relief.

The Works Progress Administration came to the rescue; the agency quickly had a significant impact, reducing the number of families on relief to 3,178, or 25.2 percent of the county population by September of 1935. WPA jobs employed 503 persons in the city of Okmulgee by late December of 1935. In September of 1936, 1,886 persons in Okmulgee County worked for the WPA; in September of 1937, that number had fallen to 1,257. The armory project was a major portion of this effort.⁷

Between late summer 1935 and mid-1936, Okmulgee city commissioners submitted proposals for several WPA projects, including sidewalks, street grading, storm sewers, school repairs, a stone cascade at Lake Okmulgee, an athletic stadium, a baseball field, a recreation center, a community center, a rose garden, and an armory. In order to obtain WPA approval for its armory proposal, the city deeded a site on the west side of Alabama Street between 1st and 2nd streets (west of downtown) to the State of Oklahoma in August 1935. Statewide armory construction was scheduled to begin on November 1 but was postponed by a federal order that brought several Oklahoma armory projects to a temporary standstill; because Okmulgee's project had not yet broken ground, it

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was not among those suspended. The order was rescinded in late November, and construction work began in earnest in December.⁸ The sponsor's share of the cost of the armory was provided in land, materials, and equipment use.

The Okmulgee Armory project developed gradually over 1936 as WPA crews erected the huge stone building. By August of that year the walls were completed, steel bowstring trusses were in place, and colored concrete was being poured for the administrative sections. The size of construction crews varied, the largest numbering 80, working in staggered shifts of six hours' duration. A total of three to four hundred men worked on the armory.⁹ The building was fit for occupation during late December 1936, and the National Guard moved in on January 1, 1937. On March 19, 1937, Okmulgee dedicated its new armory with an elaborate program. State WPA director Gen. Key and other state and local dignitaries participated in a program that began with a parade and included a cornerstone-laying by Key and Adjutant General Charles F. Barrett. A celebratory banquet and dance followed, featuring music by the WPA swing band, a sixteen-piece orchestra called the "Sooner Swingsters." Final interior details were still being completed, however, through June 1937.¹⁰

WPA projects in 1935-1936 propped up the sagging rural economy of Okmulgee County, hard-hit because of extended agricultural depression and severe drought. Major projects in and near the city of Okmulgee included Harmon Athletic Field (football/track facility), a rose garden, and the customary street, sewer, and road work. By May of 1936 more than \$500,000 had been expended for 45 projects throughout Okmulgee County. By June of 1937, the WPA had given 2,900 Okmulgee county residents 3,593,218 hours of employment on dozens of projects. The WPA's share of the \$80,000 armory project, the most expensive in the city of Okmulgee to date, was \$68,000.¹¹ In human terms, tens of thousands of person-hours of labor went into the armory's construction. Most significantly, several hundred men were employed on the project. As with most WPA projects, the armory project was labor-intensive, designed to provide as much work as possible for those on relief rolls. Most of the hours were consumed in hand labor--stonecutting and laying, pouring concrete, and installing a wood-block floor in the drill hall (an estimated 100,000 pine blocks were cut, primed, set in asphalt, sanded, oiled, and polished, in sections). A concrete floor would have sufficed, but ample time and labor were available to create a complicated design.

It is also significant, and atypical of armory projects, that the men of Company K, 179th Infantry, donated more than 6,000 hours to help build their future home, providing electrical, carpentry, and other work, pouring concrete sidewalks, planting landscaping, and paying for a carved granite insignia over the main entrance; they also donated approximately \$3,500 in cash.¹²

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MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE:

Upon completion, the Okmulgee Armory became the home of two 45th Infantry Division units: 3rd Battalion Headquarters unit of the 179th Infantry, and Company K, 179th Infantry.¹³ Reorganized in 1923 under the National Defense Act of 1920, the Guard was an integral part of United States military preparedness. Since 1920 approximately five-sixths of America's military strength lay with "citizen soldiers"--National Guard divisions and Reserve divisions in nine corps areas across the nation. Each corps area had one Regular Army division, two National Guard Divisions, and three Reserve divisions. Oklahoma, along with New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado, formed one division of the National Guard within the Eighth Corps. Despite inadequate training facilities, the Oklahoma National Guard provided service during numerous natural disasters and civil disturbances in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁴

Because the Guard paid its members a monthly fee, which they spent locally to support their families, Oklahoma communities actively competed to secure local Guard units in the years between the wars. In January 1922 Okmulgee had received a battalion headquarters unit and in June 1929 an infantry unit. By 1938 the combined total of these two units numbered 5 officers and 43 non-commissioned officers and enlisted men.¹⁵

The National Guard received only one-tenth of the War Department's budget in the interwar years, and equipment was surplus from World War I. Many units needed permanent training, drilling, and storage facilities, as Guard members were required to meet 48 drills per year. Units without permanent armories usually rented space in warehouses that often lacked proper security. The four hundred new armories created by the cooperative effort of the federal and local governments helped correct this serious deficiency.¹⁶

The new Okmulgee Armory provided permanent housing for two local units. The new facility was more than adequate for the detachment's needs. The building was divided into areas serving specific functions. The entire central section housed the drill hall, comprising the stage and the wood-block drill floor. Underground, beneath the stage, was a rifle range. The north and south wings comprised vault, supply room, and locker rooms, garage spaces, and offices, with the north wing occupied by Company K and the south wing occupied by 3rd Battalion Headquarters Company. Thus the building provided for every training need, except for field exercises.

Due in large measure to the WPA armory-building program, the 45th Infantry Division was able to achieve a level of military efficiency and readiness that prepared it to be among the first four National Guard divisions federalized in late 1940 by President Roosevelt. After the United States entered World War II, the 45th saw action in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy.¹⁷