

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

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

700  
RECEIVED 413  
10240013

APR 2 | 1994

INTERAGENCY RESOURCES DIVISION  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Tahlequah Armory

other names/site number Tahlequah National Guard Armory

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 100 Water Avenue not for publication N/A  
city or town Tahlequah vicinity N/A  
state Oklahoma code OK county Cherokee code 021  
zip code 74465

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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      nationally      statewide X locally. ( N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Bob Woods April 4, 1994  
Signature of certifying official 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 Entered in the National Register  
     See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register

     other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall 5/20/94  
for 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: RELIGION Sub: religious facility

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Works Progress Administration

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

roof ASPHALT

walls sandstone

other N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

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

=====

8. Statement of Significance

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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)

ECONOMICS

MILITARY

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1935-1937

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates 1937

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

=====  
8. Statement of Significance (Continued)  
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Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Nolen, Bryan W., Supervising Architect  
Works Progress Administration, Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

=====  
9. Major Bibliographical References  
=====

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: N/A

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10. Geographical Data  
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Acreege of Property less than 1 acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>322340</u>	<u>3975890</u>	3	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>
2	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	4	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>

N/A See continuation sheet.

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 Dr. Mary Jane Warde

organization Oklahoma SHPO date May 31, 1993

street & number 2806 W. 18th telephone (405) 377-0412

city or town Stillwater state OK zip code 74074

=====  
Additional Documentation  
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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.

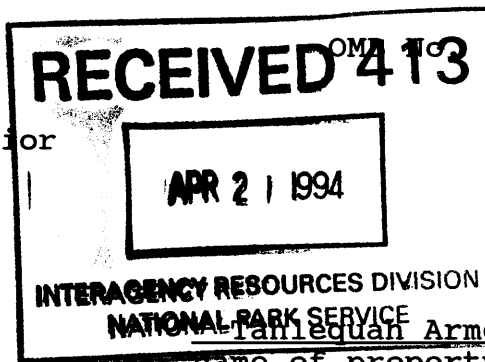
Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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

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

name Cornerstone Fellowship  
street & number 100 Water Avenue telephone (918) 456-4901  
city or town Tahlequah state OK zip code 74465





United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 9

Tahlequah Armory  
name of property  
Cherokee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

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SUMMARY:

The Tahlequah Armory (Tahlequah National Guard Armory) is a rectangular, single-story building 126' x 142'. It was built between 1935 and 1937 by the Works Progress Administration. It stands on the north side of East Delaware Avenue between North Water and North Park avenues. It is located in Tahlequah's central business district diagonally across North Water Avenue from the Cherokee Capitol square. To the east is Tahlequah Creek and a city park. The building consists of two main sections: the southwest section is a flat-roofed administrative wing set at right angles to a barrel-roofed drill hall. Walls are of uncoursed, squared, polychromatic sandstone. Its fortress-like appearance, castellated facade, and native stone construction mark it as an excellent example of the Oklahoma WPA armory. The vertical lines and projections and elongated windows suggest Art Deco influence. Although the building has had minor alterations, it retains sufficient integrity to enable it to exemplify WPA architecture in Tahlequah.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION:

The Tahlequah Armory consists of two main sections. The barrel-roofed drill hall parallels East Delaware. Centered at right angles to it is the flat-roofed administrative wing. Walls are randomly-laid polychromatic ashlar sandstone topped by a cut stone parapet. Heavy metal gutters provide drainage. The primary public entrance to the Tahlequah Armory faces East Delaware Avenue. This elevation features a centrally placed entrance set in a projecting, stepped, flat-topped portal that extends beyond the line of the flat rolled asphalt roof. Shorter pediment-topped pilasters on either side of the entrance enhance the stepped appearance and suggest an Art Deco influence. The single new metal door is flanked by side lights. The door and the side lights are dark tinted glass. They are set beneath a shallow cut stone arch over a flat lintel. Short flat-topped piers flank a shallow flight of steps leading to the door. Within the pilasters of the portal are single, narrow, fixed multiple-light windows. On either side of the portal are four tall, narrow windows. The second and third of each group are paired. Windows to the right of the portal are the original steel-framed hopper windows with pre-cast concrete sills. The paired windows are three-over-six. The single windows are two-over-four. Windows to the left of the portal have been replaced with new tinted fixed windows. At either end of this elevation is a pediment-topped pilaster that extends above the roofline. The left pilaster contains a cornerstone indicating that the building is a WPA construction. Incised stones, or embrasures, create a vertical triple-line motif high on each pilaster. Single incisions, low on the pilasters flanking the entrance and along the roofline give the appearance of arrow slits.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 10

Tahlequah Armory  
name of property  
Cherokee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION (continued)

The North Water Avenue elevation shows the clear difference between the two main sections of the building. On this elevation of the flat-topped administrative section are two large tinted fixed windows. The openings for these windows originally contained overhead garage doors. To their left is a modern metal and glass single door with a vertical transom. To the left of the glass door is a steel-framed two-over-four hopper window, similar in height and appearance to the remaining transom. At right angles to the administrative wing and to the left, the drill hall extends several feet nearer the street. A pediment-topped pilaster defines each corner of the drill hall. Each repeats the triple-line motif established on the East Delaware elevation. The parapet-topped wall of this elevation follows the curving line of the asphalt-shingled barrel roof. In the center of the drill hall is a wooden overhead door. To the right is a single wooden door topped by a vertical transom. There are two three-over-six hopper windows to the right of the doors and three to the left. All windows and the transom are steel-framed with pre-cast concrete sills. All extend to the same height.

An alley parallels the northeast elevation of the drill hall. Centered in this elevation are two single wooden doors topped by vertical transoms. There are two pairs of multiple-paned hopper windows on either side of the doors. The windows and the transoms have original steel frames and pre-cast concrete sills. All extend to the same height. A smaller multiple-light hopper window is on the far left end. The barrel roof has been extended slightly to overhang the wall for improved drainage.

The North Park Avenue elevation of the drill hall repeats the curving line of the barrel roof between two pediment-topped pilasters. Two buttresses support the rear wall of the drill hall. Between the buttresses is a small vent to the interior rifle range. To the left of the buttresses is a multiple-light steel-framed hopper window with a pre-cast concrete sill. Recessed to the left of the drill hall is the administrative wing. In the right angle formed by the two wings, the roof of the basement rifle range creates a low, flat-topped extension. There are two steel-framed three-over-six hopper windows with pre-cast concrete sills set into this elevation.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION:

The administrative wing of the Tahlequah Armory is bisected by a central hallway leading from the public entrance to the drill hall. On either side of the hallway were offices, locker rooms, classrooms, and an arms vault. There was a garage in the southwest corner of the wing. Walls were natural rough-cut sandstone. The floor was concrete, and the doors were wood panel. Alterations to these areas are described below. The drill hall has an elevated stage at

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 11

Tahlequah Armory  
name of property  
Cherokee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

the northeast end. On either side are wide piers incised with the triple line motif. The steel truss system of the roof is exposed. The floor is concrete. Beneath the stage is the basement rifle range.

ALTERATIONS:

The Tahlequah Armory has undergone extensive renovations, but most have been internal. In the central hallway an acoustical tile ceiling, neon lighting, and tile flooring have been installed. The rough sandstone walls have been painted to eliminate dust. To the right of the hallway, the offices have been carpeted, paneled, and painted. The vault has been removed and remodeled as a chapel. Carpeting, paneling, a dropped acoustical ceiling, and tinted fixed window replacement significantly alter this room. The remaining rooms have been painted and carpeted for use as classrooms but retain original doors. In the drill hall the walls have been sandblasted to remove paint. The stage at the northeast end, once blocked in, has been reopened and restored. The hall's original wood floor has been removed. Current renovations include the partitioning of the drill hall into classroom space. The partitions extend only to the level of the steel framing. External renovations include the replacement of some doors and windows, most notably in the southwest elevation of the administrative section. The rolled asphalt roof, never water-tight, has been removed, rebuilt, and re-shingled over the drill hall without noticeably changing the appearance of the building. The administrative wing still has a rolled asphalt roof. In spite of some alterations, the Tahlequah Armory retains a high degree of its historical and architectural integrity.

ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>In this section of Tahlequah "east-west" streets are perpendicular to Tahlequah Creek. "North-south" streets cross them at right angles. North Water Avenue actually lies about thirty degrees east of north, sixty degrees west of south. The Tahlequah Armory is squared on the lot relative to East Delaware and North Water avenues.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 12

Tahlequah Armory  
name of property  
Cherokee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

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SUMMARY:

The Tahlequah Armory (Tahlequah National Guard Armory) is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the Works Progress Administration of the 1930s. Under this federal program, local construction projects were devised as a way of creating jobs for unemployed and generally unskilled laborers to stimulate the local economy through payrolls and purchase of local materials. At the same time, the projects provided lasting public improvements a community might not be able to afford otherwise. This building is also important as the home of Company M, 180th Infantry, of the Oklahoma National Guard. The Tahlequah Armory is significant as an excellent example of WPA architecture and is therefore eligible for the National Register under Criterion C. The craftsmanship displayed in the use of native sandstone reflects the ideals of the WPA program. Although currently owned by a religious organization and used as a church, the Tahlequah Armory satisfies the registration requirements of Criterion Consideration A.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The 1930s brought the United States the worst economic depression in its history. To combat a major effect of that depression, unemployment, the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1935 created the Works Progress Administration. This program aimed to provide jobs for laborers on relief rolls and stimulate the local economy. The program lasted until June 1943 when full employment returned nationally as a result of the United States' entrance into World War II. By that time the federal government had spent \$10.75 billion on the program, of which \$185 million went to Oklahoma projects. The WPA stipulated that projects had to be useful, capable of providing employment for those on relief, and sponsored by the community. The Tahlequah Armory met all three criteria.

First, an armory met the criterion of usefulness. Oklahoma National Guard units never had permanent headquarters. Tahlequah's Company M, like many units, rented facilities before the construction of the armory. Such facilities were inadequate and cost the state government a total of about \$50,000 annually. Moreover, rented facilities lacked security, often resulting in the loss of arms and equipment. Captain Ben Bliss of Company M led the campaign to secure an armory for his unit. An armory would offer the added benefit of space for community activities and public meetings. Second, Tahlequah and Cherokee County needed the economic impact an armory project could provide. Once the capital of the Cherokee Nation and a thriving college town, Tahlequah, with a population of 2,495 in 1930, was approaching its centennial. But the rugged geography, depressed agricultural prices, extremes of climate in the early 1930s, and chronic poverty of the Cherokee minority combined with the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 13

Tahlequah Armory  
name of property  
Cherokee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

national depression to create severe local economic conditions. By September 1934, 2,831 families or 68 percent of Cherokee County's population were receiving direct relief. By September 1935, those numbers had been reduced to 1,995 families or 58 percent of the population, yet the county still retained one of the highest relief percentages in the state. By September 1936, Cherokee County had eight hundred people employed by the WPA.<sup>2</sup>

Armory construction was the first major thrust of the WPA Building Program in Oklahoma. By mid-1937, 126 armories had been constructed throughout the United States, and fifty-one of these projects were located in Oklahoma. When the WPA ended its program in 1943, fifty-four armories had been built and fifty-three others "reconstructed" in the state. The new construction had infused \$3.5 million into local economies.<sup>3</sup>

Congressman W. W. Hastings of Tahlequah worked diligently with Captain Bliss, Mayor J. P. Thompson, the Chamber of Commerce, and the American Legion to secure an armory construction project for the town. Such strong community support meant that the project met the WPA's third criterion.<sup>4</sup> Tahlequah was assured in September 1935 that an armory construction project was a strong possibility. Civic groups immediately began working to acquire suitable land. By early November a lot on the northeast corner of Delaware and Water avenues had been purchased by the Women's Auxiliary of the American Legion and deeded by them to the state. Construction began within days but was halted in mid-November as state and federal administrators wrangled over allocation of funds. The Tahlequah community was shocked, because a number of men had already been employed on the site. A state-wide protest won reinstatement of the armories project. By November 21 as many as fifty men were preparing the site and digging foundation trenches. Others were quarrying stone and gravel at nearby pits. Cold weather delayed construction during the winter of 1935-1936, but fifty-seven men were finishing the building within a year of ground-breaking.<sup>5</sup> Installation of the heating system delayed completion, but the building was ready for occupation by the guard unit early in 1937. The dedication ceremony took place on Tuesday, February 9, 1937. General W. S. Key, state administrator for the WPA, and General Charles F. Barrett laid the cornerstone and transferred the building to Company M. A parade, banquet, and dance for more than five hundred people was evidence that the community supported the project, their National Guard unit, and the WPA.<sup>6</sup>

The completed Tahlequah Armory cost approximately \$32,000. The drill hall was 80' x 110' with edge-grain, polished pine flooring. The stage, 48' x 16', suggested the double purpose of the drill hall as a community auditorium. The offices, supply rooms, locker rooms, classrooms, rifle range, and four-vehicle garage provided the functional facilities Company M had lacked.<sup>7</sup>

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 14

Tahlequah Armory  
name of property  
Cherokee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====

As was the case with most Oklahoma National Guard units, Company M was an integral part of its headquarters town. Guardsmen were drawn from the community to serve civilian as well as military needs. The Oklahoma National Guard was reorganized in 1923 as part of the 45th Infantry ("Thunderbird") Division. Organized in 1920, Company M, 180th Infantry, transferred its headquarters to Tahlequah from Holdenville, Oklahoma in May 1925. The unit occupied its new armory in 1937 and was able to train more efficiently. The division was mobilized in 1940 as the United States prepared to enter World War II. The "Thunderbirds," a source of pride to all Oklahomans, served with distinction in the European Theatre from the invasion of Sicily and Italy to the final surrender of Germany in 1945.<sup>8</sup>

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The Tahlequah Armory is an excellent example of the WPA armory in Oklahoma. Bryan W. Nolen, an architect and major in the National Guard, was the supervising architect for the Oklahoma WPA armory building project. Oklahoma's WPA armories were standardized as to design with variations allowed for local conditions. A total of thirty-three Oklahoma armories completed by mid-1937 were built of native stone. Eighteen more were built of brick. The designs accommodated one, two, or four units per armory. The Tahlequah Armory was typical of the one-unit design. The use of native stone quarried near Tahlequah exemplifies the WPA's aim of using locally available materials whenever possible and of keeping the design simple enough for unskilled workers. At the same time, the labor-intensive construction involved in quarrying, shaping and laying the colorful stone met the WPA goal of employing as many men as possible.<sup>9</sup> Although the building does not have a great deal of ornamental detail, its shaped pilasters, vertical projections, and use of locally quarried stone give the armory a "fortress-like" appearance and suggest an Art Deco influence.

Construction of the Tahlequah Armory began in 1935. Captain Ben Bliss of Company M was involved in every step of the project from planning to dedication in 1937. Better facilities meant better training for Oklahoma Guardsmen. Company M was mobilized with the Forty-Fifth Division in 1940 in preparation for the entrance of the United States into World War II.

The Tahlequah unit of the Oklahoma National Guard moved to a new armory in 1984. The Tahlequah Armory has been privately owned since that time and poorly maintained. Recently, however, it was purchased by the Cornerstone Fellowship, a group that has begun rehabilitating the building and converting it into a church. Although window and door openings on the southwest corner of the building have been altered, the group has no plans for large-scale changes to the exterior, which they feel is appropriate to their name. Most of the renovations are internal and do not impeach the external integrity of the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 8 Page 15

Tahlequah Armory  
name of property  
Cherokee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

=====  
building. Its location across the street from the historic Cherokee Capitol, current level of maintenance, and a nomination to the National Register will allow the Tahlequah Armory to remain a vital part of Tahlequah's historic central business district.<sup>10</sup>

ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Accomplishments: Works Progress Administration for Oklahoma, July 1, 1935-March 1, 1937 (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: Works Progress Administration, 1937), 38; Wagoner (Oklahoma) Tribune, 19 November 1935.

<sup>2</sup>The Daily (Oklahoma City) Oklahoman, 29 September 1935, 12 September 1937.

<sup>3</sup>"Accomplishments: Works Progress Administration for Oklahoma, July 1, 1935-March 1, 1937," (Oklahoma City: Works Progress Administration, 1937), 38; "Building Construction Report," Archives of the Work Projects Administration and Predecessors, 1933-1943. Series One: The Final State Reports, 1943 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, 1987), 5-6.

<sup>4</sup>The Hominy (Oklahoma) News, 14 May 1937; Cherokee County (Oklahoma) Democrat-Star, 5 February 1937; Odie B. Faulk and Billy M. Jones, Tahlequah, NSU, and the Cherokees (Tahlequah, Oklahoma: NSU Educational Foundation, 1984), 120-121.

<sup>5</sup>Tahlequah (Oklahoma) Citizen, 19 September, 14 November, 28 November 1935; Cherokee County (Oklahoma) Democrat-Star, 8 November 1935, 27 November 1936.

<sup>6</sup>Tahlequah (Oklahoma) Citizen, 24 December 1936, 11 February 1937; Cherokee County (Oklahoma) Democrat-Star, 5 February 1937.

<sup>7</sup>Tahlequah (Oklahoma) Citizen, 28 November 1935; Cherokee County (Oklahoma) Democrat-Star, 8 November 1935, 5 February 1937.

<sup>8</sup>Kenny A. Franks, Citizen Soldiers: Oklahoma's National Guard (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 40, 49-50, 62-70, 74-100, 106-107; Cherokee County (Oklahoma) Democrat-Star, 27 November 1937.

<sup>9</sup>Accomplishments: Works Progress Administration, 38.

<sup>10</sup>Interview of Allen Nolan, minister, Cornerstone Fellowship, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, October 24, 1992.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9, 10 Page 16

Tahlequah Armory  
name of property  
Cherokee County, Oklahoma  
county and State

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

Accomplishments: Works Progress Administration for Oklahoma, July 1, 1935-  
March 1, 1937. (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: Works Progress Administration,  
1937).

Cherokee County (Oklahoma) Democrat-Star. November 1935 through February 1937.

Faulk, Odie B., and Billy M. Jones. Tahlequah, NSU, and the Cherokees.  
Tahlequah, Oklahoma: NSU Educational Foundation, 1984.

Franks, Kenny A. Citizen Soldiers: Oklahoma's National Guard. Norman,  
Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984.

The Hominy (Oklahoma) News. May 1937.

Nolan, Allen. Interview. Tahlequah, Oklahoma, October 24, 1992.

Tahlequah (Oklahoma) Citizen. September 1935 through February 1937.

Wagoner (Oklahoma) Tribune. November 1935.

Verbal Boundary Description

The south 73 feet of Lot 3 and all of Lot 4 in Block 69 in the City of Tahlequah Original Plat.

Boundary Justification

These are the property's boundary lines as legally recorded in the County Clerk's Office, Cherokee County Courthouse, Tahlequah, Oklahoma. The boundaries described above are those historically associated with the nominated property.