

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

OMB No. 1024-0018



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name Pocasset Gymnasium

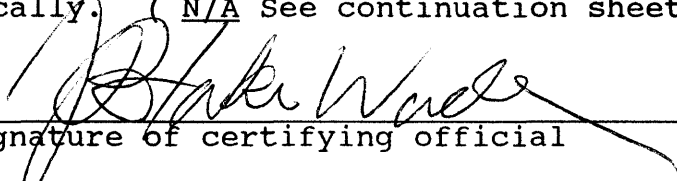
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 1/2 mi s, 1/8 mi e of Jct. Dutton Road & SH 81 not for publication N/A  
city or town Pocasset vicinity N/A  
state Oklahoma code OK county Grady code 051  
zip code 73079

=====  
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.)

  
\_\_\_\_\_

6 November 1996  
Date

Signature of certifying official

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.)

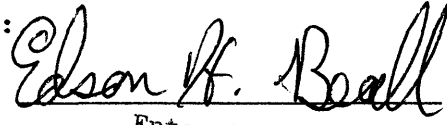
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

=====  
4. National Park Service Certification  
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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): \_\_\_\_\_

 12.13.96  
**Entered in the  
National Register**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper Date  
of Action

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5. Classification

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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 N/A

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

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6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>EDUCATION</u>	Sub: <u>education-related</u>
<u>RECREATION AND CULTURE</u>	<u>sports facility</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>EDUCATION</u>	Sub: <u>education-related</u>
<u>RECREATION AND CULTURE</u>	<u>sports facility</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

=====

7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: WPA Standardized Style

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE:Sandstone

roof ASPHALT

walls STONE:Sandstone

other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

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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

ARCHITECTURE

EDUCATION

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance 1940-1946

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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8. Statement of Significance (Continued)  
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Significant Dates 1940  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder Vahlberg, Walter T., architect  
Works Progress Administration, builder

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

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9. Major Bibliographical References  
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(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: \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Geographical Data  
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Acreage of Property Less than one acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>14</u>	<u>595170</u>	<u>3894630</u>	3	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>
2	<u>N/A</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 Cynthia Smelker, Architectural Historian

organization State Historic Preservation Office date April 1996

street & number 2704 Villa Prom, Shepherd Mall telephone 405/522-4478

city or town Oklahoma City state OK zip code 73107

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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 Amber-Pocasset School

street & number P.O. Box 927 telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Pocasset state OK zip code 73079



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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) constructed the Pocasset Gymnasium in 1940-1941. The Pocasset Gymnasium is located approximately one-half mile south and one-eighth mile east of the intersection of Dutton Road and State Highway 81 on unmarked streets in the small village of Pocasset, Oklahoma. The gymnasium continues to be used for educational purposes although since the 1960s only grades K-6 attend the now consolidated Amber-Pocasset School. The gymnasium was designed by architect Walter T. Vahlberg. Built in the WPA Standardized style, the school exhibits many representative WPA features. Predominant among these is the use of native stone for construction material and an overall permanence in design. A prominent horizontal emphasis is provided by the painted white, concrete coping encircling the entire building and the matching belt course wrapping around the south elevation. When viewed in combination with the rounded corners and eight round windows, a surprising Moderne influence is evident. Use of Moderne characteristics is more typical of a building located in an urban setting.

The one-story, rectangular building is topped by a domed, asphalt covered roof. On the west elevation is an attached, original, dropped, one-story, flat roofed, shop/finishing room extension. The walls are constructed of polychromatic, irregular course sandstone with a concrete foundation. The gymnasium's fenestration on the north and west elevations consists of thirteen large, steel, sixteen- and twenty-pane windows. There are an additional three, matching, large, steel, sixteen-pane windows in the south elevation of the shop/finishing room extension. The south elevation of the main portion of the building contains eight round windows and six steel, six-pane windows located under the belt course. The east elevation has no windows. The center panes in the windows are operable. The window sills are all concrete which has been painted white to match the building's coping and belt course.

The Pocasset Gymnasium's primary entrance, located in the rounded juncture of the south and west walls, is under a flat roof created by the extension of the belt course. Above the door is one centrally located, round window providing additional emphasis to the entry. Two other entries, consisting of wood paneled doors, are located side-by-side in the west elevation. Also in the west elevation is an overhead, paneled, garage door. Another entry, located at the juncture of

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the south and east walls, has been obscured by the construction of a concrete block building extending east from that corner. The round window above remains designating the former entry. Other alterations to the building include the probable replacement of the main entry doors and painting of the lower windows on the south elevation. Presumably, the original entry contained larger, double doors. Overall, the Pocasset Gymnasium retains its integrity to a fairly high degree.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The south wall is the Pocasset Gymnasium's primary elevation. This elevation features the primary entrance as well as the round windows and painted white, concrete belt course which highlights the building's Moderne influence. The corner, single, wood, slab door is sheltered by a flat roof extension of the belt course. Two wide, arcing concrete steps provide access to the building. Above the door is a single fixed, round, six-pane window. On the opposite end, is another fixed, six-pane, round window located in the rounded juncture of the south and east elevations. This window also marked an entrance but this original entry has been obscured by the construction of a nonoriginal concrete block addition. The wall is divided slightly under halfway from the ground by the belt course. The six steel, six-pane windows with operable centers are situated immediately below the belt course and are evenly spaced along the wall. Aligned parallel to the lower six-pane windows are six fixed, round, six-pane windows. The belt course terminates just past the south and west elevation junction at the edge of the shop/finishing room's south wall.

Set-back from the south elevation, is the south wall of the attached shop/finishing room. The dropped, flat roof has a parapet with painted white concrete coping matching the building's main roof. The fenestration on the shop/finishing room's south wall consists of three, large, sixteen-pane, steel windows which cover nearly all of the wall. The center four panes in the windows are operable.

The west elevation of the gymnasium attaches the dropped, flat-roofed extension to the main section of the building. This elevation features two single entrances, one garage entrance and two large windows in the shop/finishing room. There are no openings in the gymnasium portion of the west elevation. Unlike the

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north and south elevation, the west side of the shop/finishing room's coping is level with the extension's flat roof. On the north corner of the shop/finishing room's west elevation is the garage opening. The wood, paneled, overhead door has six windows. To the south of the garage door are two, large, sixteen-pane, steel windows with operable centers. Next to the windows are two single entrances with wood, paneled doors. The center windows in the doors have been painted white.

The north wall of the building is not disrupted between the shop/finishing room wall and the gymnasium's north elevation. There is a height difference accented by the shop/finishing room's white concrete coping and dropped windows. The windows in the shop/finishing room are paired, sixteen-pane, steel windows with operable centers. They match in height location the windows on the shop/finishing room's west and south elevation. The fenestration in the gymnasium portion of the building consist of large, twenty-pane, steel windows with operable centers and concrete sills. The windows are paired except for the easternmost which is single. On either end of the elevation are drainpipes which serve to square the rounded elevation.

The east elevation of the Pocasset Gymnasium has no openings and minimal decorative detail consisting of the building's concrete coping and a drainpipe.

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS

The Pocasset Gymnasium has undergone little alteration. The windows on the south elevation and the glazed panels in the west elevation doors have been painted white. The doors in the southwest corner entrance have also been altered. Presumably double doors, the entrance now contains only a single slab, wood door. The most significant modification to the building is the addition of a concrete block building off of the southeast corner entrance. This change has obscured an original entrance. The concrete block addition is a long, rectangular building painted brown and tan. The impact on the Pocasset Gymnasium, however, is minimal as the addition is confined to one corner on the back of the building. The Pocasset Gymnasium retains its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship and conveys the feeling of its past environment.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Pocasset Gymnasium is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The gymnasium is historically significant as an example of the work undertaken by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in Grady County, Oklahoma. The work relief provided by the WPA allowed many destitute people to survive the trying times of the 1930s while also stimulating the local, and therefore state and national, economies. The gymnasium is also historically significant due to its role in the educational experience of the schoolchildren of Pocasset. School athletic facilities allowed the area children to train their bodies as well as their minds. Additionally, the gymnasium is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. The building is architecturally significant as an example of the WPA Standardized style as applied to school gymnasiums.

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Pocasset, Oklahoma, is located roughly ten miles north of the Grady County seat, Chickasha, on U.S. Highway 81. Although a post office was recorded for the town of Pocasset as early as 13 December 1902, the town formally began in 1905. By 1909, Pocasset claimed a population of 250 "energetic citizens." The town relied heavily on the surrounding agriculture community for its economic mainstay. The Rock Island railroad passed through the town, on the east side of Highway 81, thus providing easy transportation of area products. Although never incorporated, the town of Pocasset continued to thrive through the 1920s with numerous businesses, including a hardware store, drugstore, general merchandise store, barber shop, hotel, two banks, one gin, two grain elevators, a telephone system, two cafes and two blacksmith shops. The majority of these businesses occupied brick buildings, none of which remain today.<sup>1</sup>

The town of Pocasset was holding school as early as 1906. By 1907, the Pocasset School District #26 possessed a building which accommodated academic instruction as well as religious. Due to increasing enrollment in 1908-1909 which resulted in the temporary relocation of the advanced students to the town hall, a new brick school was constructed in 1911. By 1915, the school required a "wing addition" and another teacher. A new "modernly equipped" building, costing twenty thousand dollars, was built in about 1918-1919 to accommodate the enrollment of 150

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students. In 1936, Pocasset became consolidated School District #100. As decided by local election, the two school districts merging with Pocasset to create consolidated School District #100 were Ionine School District #93 and Liberty School District #94. By September 1940, total enrollment at the Pocasset School was 157; 92 students in first through eighth grades and 65 in the upper grades of ninth through twelfth. In 1948, Pleasant Valley School District #127 consolidated with Pocasset. The following year, Pocasset became an Independent School. In 1957, Meridian School District #36, including Prairie View School District #89, Gilbert School District #36 and Washita School District #92 which merged with the Meridian School District in 1918, consolidated with Pocasset School District #100. In the 1960s, Pocasset School District #100 consolidated with Amber School District #28, bringing together a total of nineteen former school districts. Since that time, kindergarten through Sixth grade have attended school at Pocasset and Seventh through Twelfth grade have gone to Amber, approximately six miles southeast of Pocasset.<sup>2</sup>

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

The "Great Depression" of the 1930s devastated economic and social conditions nationwide. Oklahoma, heavily dependent on agriculture and oil for economic survival, suffered bitterly through the decade-long depression. Particularly hard hit were Oklahoma's more rural counties, such as Grady County. Reliant on the devastated industries of agriculture and oil, these counties lost residents at a tremendous rate. Those who stayed were frequently in need of local, state and national relief efforts to subsist.

As a predominately agricultural state, the depression era was particularly devastating to Oklahoma. The "Dust Bowl" of the 1930s, comprising a line of states from the Dakotas to Texas including Oklahoma, devastated farming conditions. During the three year period of 1936 to 1938 alone, 500 to 600 hours each year of "sun-obscuring dust" ravaged the southern plains. By 1939 due to drought conditions and erosion, it was estimated that twenty-five percent of Oklahoma's soil was lost to production. Due to declining domestic and foreign markets, overproduction of crops continued to lower farm good prices. Many farmers unable to make a living took to the road, searching for a more profitable future.<sup>3</sup>

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Furthering Oklahoma's agriculture crisis were the large number of tenant farmers in the state. In 1930, sixty-two percent of Oklahoma farmers were tenant farmers, representing the highest rate of tenancy in the Midwest. In Grady County, nearly sixty-four percent of the 4,812 farms were tenant operated.<sup>4</sup> With no tangible ties to the land, tenant farmers were essentially a dispossessed people searching for sufficient economic means to subsist. Thus, they moved frequently and often lived at below poverty standards. Their plight was compounded during the depression years by the drought conditions which reduced farm incomes even further, leaving them with little choice but to resort to the relief system or migration out of Oklahoma.

Agriculture, however, was not the only industry in the state greatly impacted by the depression. The oil market, another major economic force in Oklahoma, collapsed as factories and mines shut down. The price of oil fell from a \$1.30 a barrel in 1930 to about a \$.01 per barrel in 1932. This resulted in the closing of wells at an unprecedented rate, 21,603 wells in 1931 alone. Statewide, oil and natural gas production fell by about thirty percent, a significant economic drop. Unemployment in the state was at an all-time high. By May 1936, 242,000 workers statewide were without jobs. With local and state relief agencies increasingly strained beyond capability, the majority of counties in Oklahoma and nationwide were in need of some type of federal relief to alleviate chronic unemployment and its results.

In an effort to assist citizens in distress and stimulate the national economy, President Roosevelt legislated twenty-nine different acts between 1933 and 1939. The bills were structured to sustain various parts of the economy. The majority of acts sought to provide some type of relief for the unemployed. Believing that "work rather than direct relief should be the keystone of Federal policy with respect to needy employables", the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 authorized a program of federal relief employment. Using this act, Roosevelt created the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in May 1935 to provide jobs for the unemployed. In 1939, the Federal Works Agency incorporated the Works Progress Administration, renaming it the Work Projects Administration. The WPA continued in operation until 1943, at which time the economic stimulus provided by the war time industries lessened the need for the WPA and the federal monies allocated to the WPA were required elsewhere.

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The WPA, aimed specifically at employing the jobless on worthwhile public work projects, was particularly effective in aiding the economy. WPA projects through the payment of wages and purchase of materials had the immediate effect of aiding destitute families, as well as bolstering the local, state and national economies through the latter half of the Great Depression. The WPA also contributed a major boost to Oklahoma's educational and local government efforts. The buildings constructed by the WPA provided necessary, improved facilities for thousands of children and many local governments.

Although a federal work program, the WPA only facilitated public works projects nationwide. As part of its basic criteria, the WPA restricted construction projects to those that served a permanent and useful community function and had a "tax-supported public body" sponsor. The project sponsor provided partial monetary support, usually in the form of land and materials, as well as engineering and architectural plans and specifications. Ownership of the project then belonged to the sponsor upon completion. Prominent among the construction projects was the erection of school and education-related buildings. Schools easily fit the criteria as they provided expanded educational and social opportunities for the community for a limitless amount of time, as well as generally had the sponsorship of the district Board of Education or County Superintendent of Schools.

The WPA's participation in the construction of these schools was critical. Without the economic assistance provided by the WPA, the majority of school districts could not raise the money necessary to build a new building. By the mid-1930s, most Oklahoma school districts were at the limit of their bonded indebtedness and the assessed values of their property had dropped due to the depression.

Critically, the WPA did not neglect the non-academic side of the American educational experience in their construction projects. Supporting the contention that although "Athletic competition may not be much aid to teaching . . . it has a vast influence on (the) formation of character and has helped to make the US the grandest nation on the face of the globe today," the WPA constructed several athletic fields and gymnasiums throughout the state.<sup>5</sup> The Pocasset Gymnasium is one of four extant WPA gymnasiums identified in Grady County.

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In response to continuing educational demands, in April 1940 residents of the Pocasset school district passed a ten thousand dollar bond issue for the purpose of remodeling the current school buildings and constructing a new gymnasium. By August, proposed plans had been submitted to the WPA. The plans called for conversion of the existing gymnasium into classrooms and office space to accommodate increasing enrollment; construction of a new gymnasium measuring 110' by 66' with an attached shop building; a septic tank, disposal field, shower pit and sidewalk were also to be constructed. The cost of the total project was estimated at 28,710 dollars. The WPA would put up 17,720 dollars and the Pocasset School Board 10,990 dollars.<sup>6</sup>

The WPA work force was drawn from the unemployed living within the project area. Workers were qualified to work on WPA projects by the local Public Welfare Department, working through the National Reemployment Service. On 4 November 1940, seventy-eight men from the WPA rolls in the vicinity of Pocasset began work on the new Pocasset Gymnasium. Grant Carpenter was named Supervisor of Construction and Kyle Sheegog appointed General Foreman.

The WPA paid a flat "security wage," which was slightly higher than direct relief payments but lower than comparable private employment pay. By 1937, the average pay in Oklahoma was thirty-six dollars a month for unskilled labor. Skilled and semi-skilled workers received higher wages depending on the skill required and the experience of the workman. Of the seventy-eight men working on the Pocasset project, forty-nine were unskilled, twenty-one were ranked intermediate and eight were classified as skilled workers. By 1940, the WPA enforced an eighteen month ceiling on employment. However, the worker was eligible for reemployment after thirty days and a recertification of need.

The Pocasset Gymnasium was completed within a year of the initiation of the project. The dedication of the building was held Thursday, 24 April 1941 at eight o'clock in the evening. The dedicatory address was delivered by Dr. M. A. Nash, president of the Oklahoma College for Women. The finished gymnasium measured 85 feet by 65 feet. Among the modern equipment, the gymnasium boasted hot and cold showers and two large dressing rooms. In addition, the shop space was equipped with an overhead door to allow the easy movement of large machinery in and out for repairs.



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Nationally from its inauguration in 1935 to its termination in 1943, the WPA expended more than 10.75 billion dollars on a diversity of projects. An additional 2.8 billion dollars was provided by various sponsors on WPA projects. Almost eighty-nine percent of the WPA expenditure was used for wages, with seventeen percent of the sponsors' funds spent on labor costs. Approximately 8.5 million individuals nationwide benefitted from WPA employment at one time or another. At the peak of WPA employment in Oklahoma, January 1936, 94,821 persons were toiling on approved projects. By March 1937, 2,971 projects had been approved with 2,581 of those projects being undertaken by the WPA. Total, Oklahoma received over 185 million dollars from the WPA for a multitude of projects statewide. Sponsors statewide expended almost another sixty million dollars. Combined, the Oklahoma economy was boosted by over 232 million dollars in eight years. The projects represent an investment of more than 415 million hours of manpower earning a total of over 140 million dollars in wages for the state of Oklahoma.

The infusion of this much-needed work and money into hard pressed communities relieved the pressure of the unemployed on local, state and national economies. The WPA undertook a number of projects in Grady County, including at least thirty projects related to schools, improvements to five parks, construction of two armories, Chickasha and Minco, as well as other public service buildings. The employment of Grady County inhabitants on these projects not only aided the economy of Pocasset and Grady County but also resulted in permanent useful additions to the community. The construction of the Pocasset Gymnasium allowed the expansion of educational opportunities for the local children, including two shop classes in general shop work, woodworking and repair of home and farm machinery. The gymnasium further allowed for broader public attendance at future athletic events with a seating capacity of about 450 persons.<sup>7</sup>

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The majority of WPA buildings in Oklahoma reflect a common identity unique to this New Deal era program. Through a similarity in certain, modest stylistic and structural characteristics, WPA buildings are easily distinguishable. WPA buildings usually exhibit a high level of craftsmanship, similarity in design and restrained use of stylistic features. Additionally, WPA buildings reflect an enduring rustic, functional fortitude compatible with the trying times of the

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Great Depression. These varied unifying characteristics can be loosely categorized as the WPA Standardized style.

Oklahoma WPA buildings frequently utilized native sandstone or limestone for construction material such as at the Pocasset Gymnasium. The use of the native stone fulfilled two primary requirements of the WPA: critically, the stone was readily available at an affordable cost; and, use of the stone was highly labor intensive, thus elongating the length of employment available on the project and the number of workers needed. WPA workers procured the normally polychromatic stone from local quarries often opened especially for WPA projects. The native stone was used in both uncut and cut form. If utilized in cut form, the stone blocks were usually rusticated.

Although the majority of workmen on WPA projects were unskilled, a high level of craftsmanship was frequently apparent. The use of native stone for construction material often required an intricate ability of stone masonry. The level of skill apparent in many buildings can be attributed to the underlying premise of the WPA -- extended employment. The WPA program, generally not hampered by oppressive deadlines, allowed the workmen time to improve their skill as the building took shape. Additionally, many WPA workmen developed a previously unrecognized aptitude for the work following employment on one or more buildings.

WPA buildings favored simplification in architectural style. This is partly due to the limited construction experience of many of the project laborers. Nonetheless, the simplification in stylistic features resulted in a rustic, functional style of building loosely categorized as the WPA Standardized style. Elimination of intricate structural designs, ornate architectural features and elaborate decoration were common attributes of WPA buildings. Also identifiable were certain decorative details, such as round arched entrances, stone or red brick chimneys, ribbon windows, extended eaves, exposed rafters, chimney pots and quoins. In the WPA Standardized style, however, utilization of only one or more features was common.

Allusions to various architectural styles were evident in many of the buildings. Most predominate of these styles were Art Deco and Moderne. These styles, popular nationwide, added a modern aspect to the WPA buildings. Characteristics of these styles visible in Oklahoma WPA buildings include an horizontal or vertical

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emphasis often accentuated with the use of architectural detailing such as coping, belt courses and vertical projections. The use of stylized applied wall decoration also added a modern touch to the otherwise rustic buildings. The Pocasset Gymnasium is an excellent example of the combination of a Moderne influence on a WPA Standardized style building.

Monetary restrictions often limited the design and scale of WPA buildings. Thus, the more prevalent type of building constructed by the WPA in Oklahoma, armories and schools, frequently utilized standardized plans. The Schoolhouse Planning Division of the Oklahoma State Department of Public Instruction provided a catalog of free construction plans and specifications from which sponsors selected school buildings of four rooms or less costing under ten thousand dollars. Education buildings constructed in Oklahoma, therefore, were often very similar in design. Although the Schoolhouse Planning Division included gymnasiums in their catalog, the Pocasset Gymnasium does not follow any of the published plans.

The buildings constructed by the WPA, such as the Pocasset Gymnasium, remain as architectural testimony to the social ills and remedies of the 1930s. Overwhelmingly functional and utilitarian in nature, the buildings nonetheless represent the local and national efforts to resist the debilitating effects of the worst depression in American history with a certain fortitude and style. Although each building was constructed by workmen of differing skill levels, the buildings reflect an overall identifiable character not evident in other New Deal era or subsequent building programs.

Additionally, the Pocasset Gymnasium is architecturally significant as the only identified, extant WPA gymnasium in Grady County constructed of native stone. Three other WPA gymnasiums in Grady County were identified in the "WPA Structures Thematic Survey (Phase III)" conducted by the Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey, an adjunct of the Department of History at Oklahoma State University, in 1986 and 1987. This project produced a list of extant Works Progress Administration properties in the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office's Management Regions #1, #6, and #7. Grady County is in Region #7. The WPA gymnasiums in Grady County identified in the study include the brick Agawam Gymnasium which has suffered a loss of integrity; the brick Bridgecreek Gymnasium which is similar to the Pocasset Gymnasium but has a larger addition on the side, some windows infilled and no round windows; and, the brick Alex Gymnasium and

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Auditorium on which windows have been infilled with metal and the doors altered.

ENDNOTES

1. "Pocasset, Oklahoma," Strum's Magazine, Volume 7, Number 6 (February 1909), 75.
2. Gwen Jackson, ed. "The History of Amber-Pocasset." (Amber-Pocasset School Administration, April 1993), 20-22, 261. See also Gladys Canan, "Pocasset -- The Town and its History," c. 1921.
3. Ibid., 708.
4. "Grady County," (OHS Vertical File, n.p., n.d.), 2.
5. Smelker, "Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) Resources in Lincoln County, Oklahoma," 15.
6. The Minco Minstrel, 18 April 1940 and 8 August 1940.
7. Chickasha Daily Express, 23 April 1941.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the intersection of the unmarked streets south and west of the gymnasium, proceed 100' north, then 200' east, then 100' south, then 200' to the point of beginning, Block 21, Original Town of Pocasset, SE 1/4, Section 5, Township 8N, Range 7W.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries include the area historically associated with the Pocasset Gymnasium but excludes the other non-WPA school buildings on the block which do not retain their integrity and do not contribute to the significance of the Pocasset Gymnasium.